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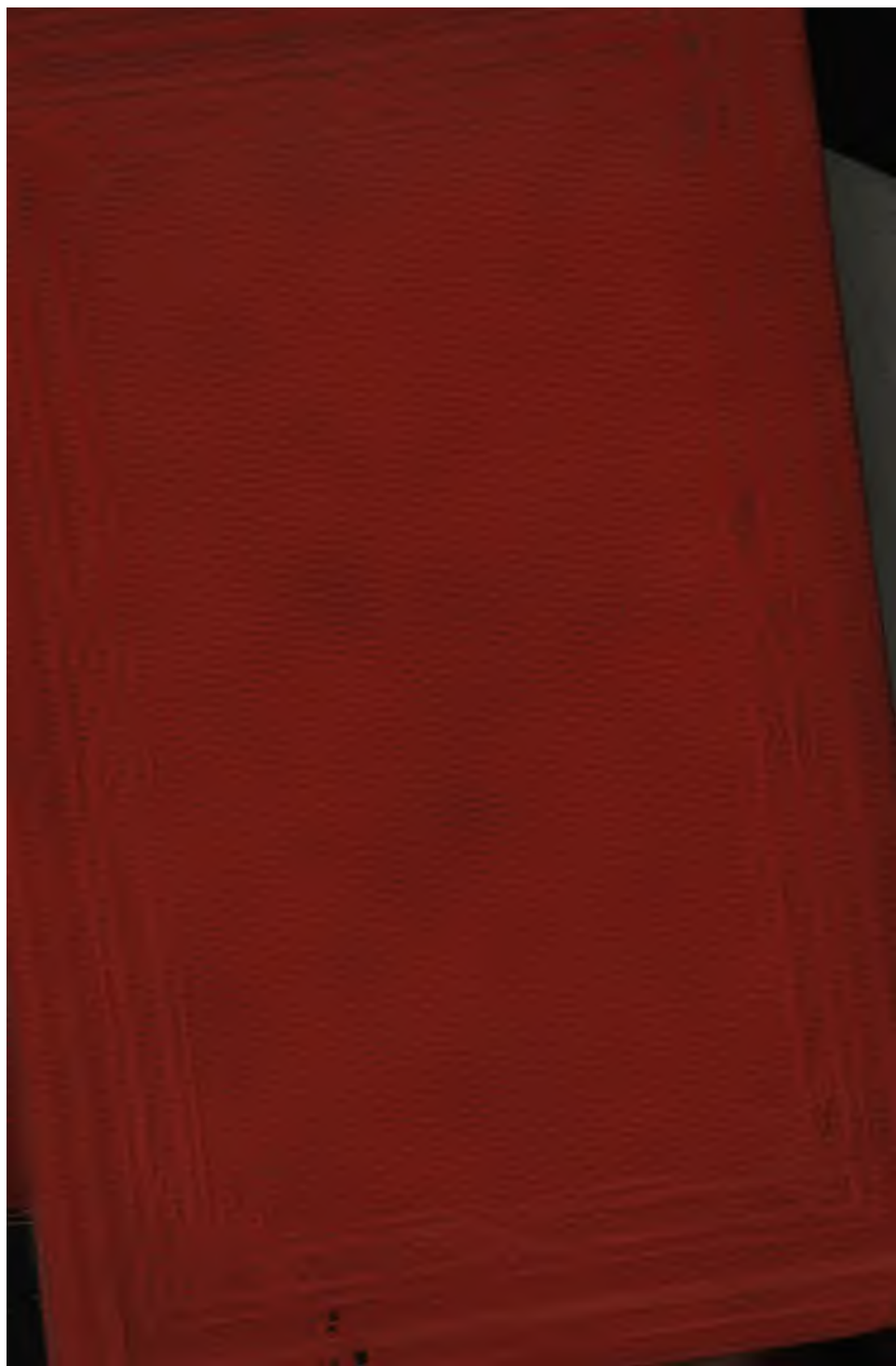
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# ICE BOUND.

BY

WALTER THORNBURY,

AUTHOR OF

“BRITISH ARTISTS FROM HOGARTH TO TURNER,”

“EVERY MAN HIS OWN TRUMPETER,”

ETC., ETC.

“Thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice.”  
*Measure for Measure.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:  
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1861.

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## ICE BOUND.

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ON the last day of May, 1836, the *Stormy Petrel* set sail from Hull harbour, on a pretended whaling expedition, but really on a voyage of discovery, in search of the passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific—a favourite dream of our brave old commander, Captain Beaver, who died five years ago last Michaelmas, in the Orkney Islands.

We were rigged as a barque, as being most suitable for working through the ice, and requiring the fewest men, and were strengthened with additional timbers, such as Captain



Parry's vessels, the *Isabella* and *Alexander*, had adopted. I must not torment my readers with professional jargon, but I may just say, that we carried thirty-six men, and having, besides our mizen-topsail lengthened, our mizen-mast, topmast, gaff, and driver-boom, so as to make up, by a large driver and gaff topsail, the same quantity of after-sail as before.

We ballasted with coals—about thirty-four chaldron we could stow. We took care to have housing cloths to roof in the deck, to keep out the snow; and the men were supplied with wolf-skin blankets, as well as good suits of warm clothing.

I, John Perry, the first-lieutenant, as well as Thomas Sidmouth, the surgeon, and George Siderfin, the astronomer, a Devonshire man. took great pains to make sure that all the anti-scorbutics that we took out should be good, as well as the essence of malt and hops, and the pemmican, so important to Arctic voyagers.

As to the azimuth-compasses and dipping-

needles, Siderfin took care of those; while I took charge of the sailing requisites of the vessel, and of all that was necessary for the health and well-being of the men; for Captain Beaver, though an admirable commander, was rather apt to day-dream, and to indulge in visions of discovery.

Well, we started, as I have said, without cheer or "God bless you," for no one knew our purpose; and on September the 22nd we made the island of Rono, and Bara on the following morning. On Sunday the 30th we passed "the sunken land of Bus," as it is called in Dawson's chart, and, heaving-to, obtained soundings in one hundred and forty fathoms, in a bottom of very fine white sand.

On June the 13th, Sunday, we saw large flocks of Cape hens—a proof of our being off Cape Farewell, as these birds are never seen in any other part of Davis' Straits, or even in Baffin's Bay.

On Thursday, the 17th of June, we ob-

served the sea to be of a lighter green than usual; and the next day, standing to the northward, fell in with our first stream of ice and several icebergs.

Now Siderfin grew serious, and got out his self-registering thermometer; and I looked to my log books, for we were fast entering the region of death. The ice grew hourly more packed and heavy; the birds, as the fulmar, petrels, boatswains and kittiwakes, the black guillemot and Greenland swallows, more numerous than usual.

A breeze soon springing up from the eastward, we bore away to the W.N.W., through rather close-sailing ice; and here, as I shall not have much room, I may as well describe the various horrors we had gradually to encounter.

We had got gradually into it—by *it* I mean the ice: first came floating slabs, looking like large rounded blocks of diamond, soon lost in the broad wallow of blue water and forgotten, either as warnings or as harbingers of the cold land of silence and death that we so

rashly sought. Then, in a few days' more sail, sharp teeth of ice jaggng the edges of the shore, and turning them into huge saws, miles and miles long. Next, *sludge*—as the sailors call it—or a general thickening of the whole surface of the sea, as if some turbid substance had been mixed up with it—the thickening matter being really, when examined by Siderfin's ever-ready microscope, a mere mass of fragile prismatic crystals, resembling wet snow. Here we saw the unspun hemp with which Winter, some hundred miles farther on, spun his adamantine chains.

The next region of death we entered was where the sludge-ice, being broken by continual oscillation into irregularly-shaped fragments of some three inches diameter, froze at night into a continuous sheet of a firmer texture, which, as it brittled up under the ship's keel, dropped into thin cakes, that our men called "pancakes." Then, the ice began to thicken into real bay ice, two inches thick, on which we could walk near the shore,

and on which the polar bears ventured, growling at the sailors of our boat—and the light ice would sometimes, in a few nights, deepen into heavy slabs three feet thick, as Siderfin ascertained by careful measurement.

We all knew that before we came to the *ice-fields*—as we called the sheets of ice, so extensive that the further end could not be seen from the *crow's nest*—we should pass through various degrees of cold and danger. Through *floes*, for instance, or large, wandering, heaped-up masses; through *brash ice*, or flocks of floating masses; and also wide drifts of open ice, through which the *Stormy Petrel* could easily pass. And long before this we had begun to meet icebergs, half-a-mile long, and often 100 feet high, bristling with frozen *aiguilles*, or glistening with a thousand jewel colours. Once, when we had been moored to one on a previous voyage, I well remember, after a strong north-westerly swell beating some hours on the shore, seeing a huge buttress, as large as a

church—150 feet high, at least—suddenly topple over and fall into the sea, with a crash as of an outburst of thunder cannon, and a lather and churn of the water that seemed to smoke and steam for hundreds of yards round. I trembled when I saw it; for I heard at Hull that a similar piece had once fallen, near the Seven Icebergs, on a Russian ship—killed the mate and two able-bodied seamen, broke the fore and main masts, and sprung the bowsprit. But what at first alarmed us most of all, and excited the superstitious fears of our sailors, were the noises—groaning, muttering, moaning, and thunder-claps—made by the ice at night, when splitting either through a ground-swell, or some sudden contraction of cold or expansion of heat. I have, I assure you, reader, seen the ice in a few moments break away for miles along the shore, and then, beating together, sink with the roar as of a thousand cannon.

And one special night, when the ice seemed full of threatening and angry voices, I particu-

larly remember, because that same night our lemon-juice bottles in three cases burst, and at the same time we lost nearly all our vinegar, except a few bottles of highly-concentrated essence, which had been removed from near the ship's side, where the rest was kept.

Directly it became evident to us, clamping itself as a dreadful certainty in our minds, that the good ship, the *Stormy Petrel*, must winter in these Arctic solitudes, it became essentially necessary to amuse the men and keep their minds alert, cheerful, and full of hope.

Sidmouth was most attentive about the health of the crew, and instituted, by Captain Beaver's permission, a daily exercise drill, when the men were not on shore shooting ptarmigan, or looking for sorrel, or *tripe de la roche*. He drew them up in single file, put them through musketry-drill, and then "worked them," as he called it, in his manly merry way, racing them up and down stairs—fore and aft—till the blood spread freely to their extremities. The

men grumbled a little at first, at what seemed to them a useless expenditure of time; but they soon learned to like it, and used to romp and laugh over their drill like boys playing at soldiers. It is mere justice to Sidmouth to mention, that, from that time till we sighted England, only one man of his exercise squad was ever ill, except from accidental frost-bites—save one boy, James Parker, who became despondent and afflicted with the scurvy, being, as I always said, of small stamina and sluggish in circulation.

We were now well wedged in for the winter—the ice twenty inches thick, cut with ice-saws all round the ship—an iceberg adjacent of a dangerous height, hewn away level with the ship's bulwarks—the awnings secured firmly over the deck—the men's beds made permanent, the hammocks stowed away, and everything made close and snug—lastly, double windows put in to the cabins and closed with felt at the chinks. The third night after we had determined to spend the winter in our present



quarters Captain Beaver said to us—I made a note of his words at the time :—

“Gentlemen, God helping” (he was a pious man, was Captain Beaver, of the Wesleyan persuasion, as his father, I heard him say, had been before him)—“Gentlemen, God helping, we shall do very well here, if we can but keep the men’s hearts up.”

And we all agreed to it ; for we well knew that, once discouraged, the men would mutiny and compel us to turn the ship’s head to England, to our eternal disgrace, and even pecuniary loss ; for the Admiralty had offered a large reward to arctic discoverers, and we were in an untrod region, as Captain Beaver and Siderfin well knew ; and if they did set sail, we well knew, from the present state of the packs and the early setting in of the Aurora, as well as the peculiar colour of the ice-blinks, that the ship would be beset, and in a few days crushed to pieces by the icebergs that filled the channel, and grew larger and more dangerous at the mouth.

Siderfin, suddenly looking up from the amber glass of grog in which he was watching the miniature reflection of his face, suggested the erection of a theatre, and the performance of plays twice a-week.

We agreed unanimously that nothing could be better. The very next morning, indeed, we fell to work, collected all the spare spars and canvas, rigged up a new theatre, the very erection of which exhilarated the men and gave them perpetual subjects for conversation; and rummaging out "The Mayor of Garratt," one of Foote's broad farces, and "Miss in her Teens," an amusing, old-fashioned comedy, with *Fribble*, a ridiculous, attenuated dandy in it—conned our parts when we were on watch (against rules), while Siderfin set to work to paint the scenes, being an amateur artist of no mean order.

It was a delightful thing to leave the deck, and the ghastly glimmer of the ice-blink, over perpetual snow, or the lurid semi-darkness of noon-day, to enter a little cheerful lighted

room, a trifle warmer than the outer air, to see Captain Beaver in the stage box, grand in his full uniform, with which he always honoured us—to find the pit full of hearty grinning faces—and to hear the orchestra of two violins and a trumpet begin their labour with more energy than skill.

Well, all this went on with great spirit for nearly two months ; then the theatre began to flag—merely because we had only one torn volume of the “British Theatre” from which to draw our repertory. The men never got tired of the performers. The performers never got tired of trying to amuse the men ; but I, Siderfin, and Sidmouth, the chief actors, felt, I confess, a little jaded with repeating the same words and gestures night after night, and grew afraid that we should soon cease to obtain that applause that, rolling about like laughing thunder, had so long kept us vigorous to our work. Siderfin, a very wag always, went so far as to declare, in our little green-room, the last week of our

performance, that he had taken careful note of the yawns, and found them steadily on the increase—from two on Monday to fourteen on Thursday. The older hands began, too, to sleep—and snore, which was worse; altogether it was evident, hurt our vanity as it might, that the days of our Royal Arctic Frozen-up Theatre were numbered.

That night was a sad one with us all. Captain Beaver, who never talked much, and was generally a real kind soul, in a sort of reverie balanced his grog spoon, and sat in rather a melancholy silence. The ship's boy had just told him privately that there had been grumbling round the galley-fire about the cook having been punished for selling the boatswain's mate salt grease that Siderfin had denounced as likely to produce scurvy.

I at once suggested the starting a newspaper, to be called "The Whaler's Journal, or the Ice-berg Intelligencer," which Sidmouth was to edit. The proposal instantly took. We had an old cigar-box fitted up as a sort of lion's

mouth, to receive contributions. The several articles—to which nearly every one contributed, from worthy Captain Beaver himself to the cabin boy, who wrote love songs in the Yorkshire dialect—were all read, condensed, revised, and annotated by the editor, copied in a fair hand into a large quarto volume, and then read every Saturday, after evening grog, to the whole ship's company, except the watch, with wonderful applause, by Sidmouth, who had a good voice and some degree of elocution, acquired from certain early theatrical tastes.

This went on very well for six weeks, at the end of which time an alarming tone of personality began to pervade the paper, so utterly subversive, as Captain Beaver thought, of all discipline, especially in a time of special need and emergency like the present, that he instantly, though with relentless hand, suppressed the paper, ordering all the last boxful of contributions to be burnt, much to the secret indignation and annoyance of all the crew,

particularly of the ship's cook, who had that week perpetrated a sonnet to a certain "Clarinda," bar-maid at a low tavern in Hull.

We were all of us now really at our wit's end how to wile away the long evenings, and keep the men's minds diverted and engaged, without leading to any infringement of good order.

Many a night on the watch, on deck, or in my hammock, did I cast over any games or amusements that could be practised by many men at once. At last Siderfin, one night after looking at the cabin-lamp for thirty minutes without removing his eyes, suddenly leaped up, upset his grog, snapped his long white pipe across his knee, flung the fragments at a portrait of Lord Nelson that hung on the cabin-door, and exclaimed, "I have it!"

His plan, it seemed, was that anyone of us, from the first lieutenant to the surgeon's assistant, who had any taste for writing, should at once set to and write by turns a short novel or story, to be read aloud three times a week by

Sidmouth, so many chapters an evening, after the tantalizing system adopted by the delightful lady in the "Arabian Nights." A Charles the Second story, an Egyptian romance, some Welsh tales, and a novel of the time of the Roman emperor Tiberius, were instantly promised. Indeed, I have remarked that men who are in the habit of scribbling much have always a wealth of such trifles in store. We gave our authors a week's "law," as people say when out coursing, and then began our public readings, which soon became exceedingly popular. I might, were I sarcastic, say much more popular than they deserved ; but then, remember that the stories, if poor, were entirely original—that our sailors had exhausted all other kinds of amusement—and that the intervals between the readings lent zest to the reading by delaying the moment when the listener's curiosity would be gratified. Many a time when the men were at work of the afternoons, drawing and knotting yarn, or making

points and gaskets, have I heard knots of them criticizing the several stories with all the keenness of young reviewers.

3 And here, before I come to my first story, I may as well mention our hours on board ship during this wintering in Hooper's Bay. All hands were turned up at a quarter before six, and the decks were then rubbed with stones and warm sand till eight, when both officers and men went to breakfast. At a quarter past nine we beat to divisions, when the men (as in Parry's expedition before) were inspected as to their personal cleanliness and the warmth of their clothing. If the weather was fine, the men then went on shore to walk till noon, when they dined.

In the afternoon they drew and knotted yarn on the lower deck; at half-past five the decks were cleared up; at six we again went to divisions, and inspected the men, their berths, and bed-places; after which the people went to their supper, and the officers to their tea.



It was after this pleasant meal that we usually had our readings. On other evenings the men danced or sung on the lower deck till nine, when they went to bed, and the lights were extinguished. Nor should I forget to say that, for fear of fire, the quartermaster visited the lower deck every half-hour, and reported to the officers of their watch that all was safe. We also, I may mention, during the whole winter, kept a tank-hole cut in the ice near the ship, and sawn out regularly twice a-day.

With this proviso, I begin with my own poor story, "The Madman's Novel."

# THE MADMAN'S NOVEL.

(IN TWO CHAPTERS.)

WRITTEN BY A PATIENT NOW CONFINED IN BETHLEM  
HOSPITAL. PUBLISHED BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE  
GOVERNOR.

---

## *The Governor of Bethlem's Certificate.*

"THIS is to certify, that the MS. now delivered by me into the hands of the publishers is the *bona fide* composition, and is in the actual handwriting, of John Levison, lunatic, a patient, No. 32, in B ward of Bethlem Hospital, St. George's-in-the-Fields. Levison, who is a journeyman printer, of Banner Lane, St. Luke's, was apprehended

on the 4th of January, 1834, for threatening his wife's life, and killing his infant child, aged five years, in a fit of mania. Since he has been under my care, his frenzies have gradually subsided into a belief that he is Gehazi, the Wandering Jew, who, having struck our Saviour on his way to Calvary, was doomed to remain on earth till the Last Judgment. Levison spends his whole time, when not walking in the long galleries or the airing grounds, in writing out what he calls the story of his various transmigrations. On most other subjects he is quite sane. It is with his full consent that I have handed over his MS. to the publishers.

“Witness my hand, this 12th day of August, 1836,

“GEORGE CASTLETON, Governor.”

“*Bethlem Hospital,*  
“*St. George's-in-the-Fields.*”

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*Medical Certificate from the House-Surgeon.*

“John Levison has been under my care six

months next Tuesday. His frenzy-fits have quite subsided, and he now needs no restraint. His eye is bright, no longer troubled and restless—his tongue quite clean. With the exception of an unshakable belief that he is Gehazi, the Wandering Jew, and that he has lived more than 1800 years, he is in the full possession of his senses. His memory is good, and his powers of combination and invention are exceedingly active. I consider him, however, as not in a fit state ever to be discharged, as his brain must eventually undergo a softening.

“Signed by me,

“EDWARD WILSON, House-Surgeon.

“*Bethlem Hospital,*


“*St. George's-in-the-Fields,*

“*August 12, 1836.*”

MS.

\* \* \* \* \*

No, I didn't kill my child—no, no ! Oh ! not that dark room where the fiery eyes grin and stare ! — Well, then, I'll be quiet, keeper, and get to my paper and ink, as the




governor told me; for he is going to publish to the world who I am, and all my lives—my library of biographies—and then the King will send for me, and I shall be dismissed with honour—(ah! to think of cheating so that cold-eyed man!—the fool, to be made a governor!)

Poor dull materialist! he sees no red hell boiling down under the paving-stones of this London. He knows of no golden heaven up above the dark fogs that ever overshadow this house of woe! He will not believe that I, John Levison, of Banner Lane, St. Luke's, formerly of Blue Anchor Court, Rotherhithe—first, groom in Sir Richard Dyce's family, then 'bookbinder, and, lastly, journeyman-printer at Clowes's, in Blackfriars—was once Gehazi, the physician of the Street of the Pomegranate, in the road leading to the Golden Gate of the city of Zion.

No! When I proclaim it in the airing-grounds, these madmen all laugh and point at me. The mad soldier, who was with the

Bloody Half-Hundred in the Peninsula—the old man, who swore he would take my life—stark mad both—flout and mock me! And on dull cold days in the galleries, when visitors' earnest faces are looking timidly through the bars, and the mad painter is busy at his canvas, and the mad tailor is shaping his tinsel crown, I am ever the butt of the ward because I *will* talk of that dreadful noon, when I came back from the plains of Jericho, and met the bleeding wretch who I now know was the Saviour—God in the flesh—the Messiah of the prophets—1800 years ago, and no death—no death! O God! hasten on the Judgment, for this my punishment is greater than I can bear!

There, now—look at that old man: isn't that a sight to make the angels weep? Look at him! Like a new-caged bird against the wires, how he beats against the bars of that staircase window, one thin leg, warped and shrunk, thrust out into the cool pure air, as if even that poor freedom gave him hope and



life. But, then, he deserves it—he is raving mad, and killed his old wife at Hackney !

No, keeper, I didn't—don't drive me mad ! I didn't stab the child ! Don't remind me of it, for it cuts into my brain !

How he clings to the bars, and never looks up, though, laughing and merry, the gay visitors, thoughtless and happy, pass him by to gaze at the mad pilot, who believes he has a glass head !

It is enough though to disorder one's senses to see this crowd of mad creatures, pacing all day up and down, up and down these long, dull galleries, with their fixed, hopeless looks, and their pale, purgatorial faces—creatures without a God, without hope, without memory, with a fierce animal life latent in their eyes, the fire at the brain and the load at the heart. This for love, that for religion—A for ambition, B for avarice—all very mad, and I, the only sane one here ; for, let me say, the keepers are not all of them right, and the governor's quite cracked on some points.

But I must go write down my transmigrations

—how I died and changed—that's what he gave me this paper for ; I must begin with my first life, my Jewish life ; and I will toil at it as much as these groans and howlings will let me, because I think that when the world knows my story I shall be released at once from this house of doom. I promised, too, to have a chapter ready before the governor returned, and the clock's now pointing to three. I only wish I had a quiet room away from these madmen over the cupola, or could get into the porter's lodge in the portico ! Well — 1820 years ago—well, well.

#### MY JEWISH LIFE.

Yes ; it was thus.

I was a physician in the street of the Pomegranate, hard by the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, that points to Damascus. My name was Gehazi, the son of Phinehas, the son of Elkanah, of the tribe of Benjamin.

I was sitting in my shop, three hours after sun-rise, weighing out some spikenard, very precious, when a meagre Arab, wearing a torn



cloak of camel's hair, and having a yellow handkerchief fastened round his dusty hood, entered, and bade me rise and come with him a day's journey, to the city of palm-trees, where his sheikh lay ill.

I, desirous to collect round that Jericho specimens of the spider moss, very virtuous against bites of the rock-scorpions, arose and went, paying (with a curse underbreath) the usual fine of thirty pence to the armed centurion at the gate, for leaving the city before noon.

And I said, looking up to Calvary hill, "Soldier, what mean those three bare trees yonder by the olive bushes on Mount Calvary—are they fresh signal-posts for the hill country forts?"

He insolently replied, "They are malefactors' crosses, and are ready for the Jewish dogs, who die to-morrow at the third hour."

"What!" I said, "has, then, some slave broken a Roman lady's fan, or have the carp in the governor's tank been over-fed?"

"Neither of these," he said, showing his white teeth, and dropping his spear with a jolt, for he was a barbarian soldier, blue-eyed, and from the Rhine country ; " the two are thieves and murderers who stabbed a priest in the outer court ; the third, I know not whom, a mad preacher, who leads about idle fishermen, and heals lepers, but does no special harm."

" Ay, some snake-charmer, perhaps," said I ; and, mounting my dromedary, passed quickly down towards the brook Kedron, chanting a psalm of jubilee, and thinking over the last strange case of delirium, in that soldier of the Dragon legion, who lodged in Mount Acra, and had served in Egypt, and who believed that he had seen a street beggar, one Bartimæus, a vagabond fellow, who lived among the tombs, suddenly cured of blindness ; I knowing him stone dark, with ten years red ophthalmia, having dismissed him last Nisan as incurable.

" Curse on these cut-throat Romans !" I thought, " with their Mars, Romulus, their

taxes, and brutish idols ; still one good at least we get from them, if we rid us of such dangerous quacks as this street curer of the blind, who retards our noble science of healing, and draws the hard-earned pence from the foolish poor, who kiss his feet, and despise us, the true ministers of God."

Jericho being six hours' journey from Jerusalem, we had determined to rest at the spring of Elisha, which is half-way between Beth-Jamel and the doomed city where the Arab lay ill. Our road, after we left the Valley of the tombs, at the doors of some of which the madmen hooted at us, passed between patches of corn and sesame, and broken slopes and water-courses, here and there shaded with trees. Already the lower elevation of the plain weighed upon us with a sense of dull, feverish heat, so at noon we rested.

Who should suddenly meet me under the terebinth tree but Bartimæus, the blind beggar, his eyes still, as I expected, covered from the glaring sun. As I approached he did not beat

and shuffle with his stick, and gasp out a salutation, but slowly cutting in two a melon, asked me not for alms.

“Hail, Rabboni!” he said.

“And who’s this juggler who cures blind men, Bartimæus the blind,” I said, half-angrily; “I pray that the tree to make his cross be as tall as this terebinth. Did I not often tell thee that none but God could heal thee, thou leper’s godson?”

Bartimæus answered quite calmly, and with no frown or stamp—

“Thou saidst truly, none could heal me but God; and he, God, *hath* healed me.”

As he spoke he pulled away his bandage, and behold his eyes were whole as my own! “Blessed be Jesus!” he shouted. Then I cried, in the blindness of my heart, “Thou filthy impostor, thou wert never blind, and this is one of thy beggar’s tricks, that will one day bring thee to Herod’s amphitheatre. Smite him, Arab, with thy *nebout*!”

And my Arab smote him; but, without a

taunt or mock, the man cried, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!" and passed away into the sun, his lips moving as if in prayer.

And I said again, being full of wrath, "Run, Arab, after that beggar, and take away his stolen melon, for he is a liar and a cheat!"

The Arab, with a cruel laugh, did so; but he said, "The beggar only cried, 'The God who sent the ravens will send the beggar food!'" Then I cursed him, and took my meal, saying long graces, after the manner of the Pharisees, knowing that the Arab worshipped the Devil of the Moon, and knew not the God of Israel.

We had long lost sight of Mount Moriah, and what the Arab called "the Great Spirit's house," from whence you can see Pisgah, the hill country, and the great range of the Dead Sea; and we were descending that pebbly mountain road, leading rapidly down into the plain, where the silver trumpets had once sounded so terribly. Every stone was to me a monument, every rock a home of memory.

Below lay Gilgal, where the angel appeared to Joshua; there was the school of the prophets; yonder Samuel sat in judgment; there the first Passover was celebrated, after our fathers passed the Jordan; here Elijah mounted in the burning chariot, that was drawn by the horses of fire; here, too, on the sixth bridge, my father once smote the Philistines, having left his plough in the furrow to rally the chosen people in the pass of Bethoron.

I was feeling the pulse of my Arab guide—for he had complained of a burning pain in the chest, and his tongue was furred—when, at a turning of the road, we met a litter, carried by four people of Mauritania, having silver bracelets on their black arms, and scarlet turbans on their heads. Two young Copts behind led each a hunting-leopard, while a third carried an ape, with a gold collar round its neck. Inside the litter reclined an unwieldy Roman officer, far gone in dropsy, pale and bloated, his flaccid fingers loaded with *scara-bæi* rings, by which I knew him at once to be

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Lucius Junius Bibo, Governor of Gaza, lately Proconsul of Upper Egypt, but disgraced by Tiberius for not having sent a sufficient number of hippopotami for the supply of the Roman amphitheatre. He had lately written to me for a talent's worth of Lemnian earth, and I supposed he was on his way to visit me at Jerusalem.

A blow from my Arab's ready nebout stopped the insolent Moors, who would have pushed us to the wall. I then advanced to the litter, and, drawing the purple curtain, announced myself as Gehazi, the son of Phinehas.

The miserable debauchee did not even open his pig eyes, but said, languidly, "I have nothing for him. Bid him be gone, or loose the Indian leopards."

"I am Gehazi, the physician of Jerusalem!" I cried indignantly.

"What? Jesus, the son of Joseph—the great magician who cured the centurion's servant?" he said, with a sigh of fatness.

“No, Bibo ; but Gehazi, the great physician of the Street of the Pomegranate.”

“Then, for the love of Venus, let me sleep ; for I want neither thee nor thy filthy Lemnian earth, which is but the scrapings of Vulcan’s sandals, and only fit for Jews, or the poor Cyrenian I threw it to at Bethlehem.”

“My shekels, Roman !” I exclaimed, “or Cæsar shall hear of it !” then, exchanging anathemas, we passed on, the Moors shouting, the leopards growling, and the ape chattering. By heaven ! if I had had a spear, I would have run the white-blooded sot through the stomach, and have at once rid him of his life and his disease !

Determined to bring these religious cheats before the notice of the Sanhedrim at Tiberias, I rode moodily on, and, passing the huts of Jericho, and the Bull Tower that Herod erected to keep the Gideonites in check, I went on an hour farther to the banks of the Jordan, where the chief lay encamped.

Hills dotted with rare cypresses, black,



silent, and untenanted by birds ; slopes of thorny bushes, shallow water-courses, already dry with the heat, led us at some distance from the balsam fields for which this district was renowned, down to the bed of the Jordan : not the mere moving current of sand that pours itself into the salt bitterness of the Dead Sea ; but a swift and rapid river, attended on its course by dense multitudes of nepal, tamarisk, and plane trees, that crowd down to its waters as if to do it homage. Beyond the corn fields spread the rose laurels, beyond these the acacias, the almond, and the fig ; on the higher ridges rose the dwarf oaks and the box ; and below lay these flowering thickets of oleander, where the nightingale sang even at noon-day, its nest trellised with the vine and the sedder tree.

I forgot all my professional jealousy at the sight of this land of milk and honey. The lark sprang from the broad surfaces of the corn, not yet brazen red in the rich ex-

panses of full summer, and carolled to God a psalm joyful and holy as that of the child David beside the sheep-folds. The nightingale answered it from the thicket, careless of the wild beast, whose lair likewise is often among the flowers.

All of a sudden my Arab turned a corner of the path, and, shading his eyes from the glare of the sun, uttered an exclamation of amazement. He pointed and rubbed his eyes; but I could see no black cone-like tent, no blood-mare tied to a spear stuck in the sand. There were no children swarming in the date trees, no playful kids bleating round their dams.

"Here I left the Arab," he said; "and, by the star Remphan, I know not whither he is gone."

As we drew nearer, we could see the marks of an encampment, the holes in the sand where the spears had been, the trample of hoofs, the marks of the tent pins, and the black rings of the camp fires.

While my Arab was applying his hand to the gray ashes to see if they were still warm, to ascertain how long his friends and the sick chief had left—for he had now found prints of camel hoofs in the direction of the Dead Sea coast—in searching for the track I came upon a man of a solemn and winning countenance asleep under a wild fig-tree.

Rising calmly to his feet, he returned my angry look with a solemn greeting, followed by a long and enquiring look.

“As the cedar,” said my Arab, reprovingly, “loses none of its perfume by imparting it to him who sits under its trunk, so does a man lose no honour by courtesy to a stranger.”

“A second Solomon,” I said, angrily; for the day’s disappointment had disturbed my temper by ruffling my pride.

“As we Arabs,” he said again, paying no heed to my annoyance at his composure, “care not for the pearls, because they are not pulse, and will not boil—so the Jew cares not for those from whom he cannot bleed the shekels.”

“Son of the Edom horse-stealer,” I said, “is it not enough that thy chief must send for me on this fool’s errand, but thou too, son of a dog, must mock me with thy foolish sayings? Know that to kill thee were but to me as to crush a scorpion on the wall;” and I picked up a huge flint to stone the unbeliever.

Then he, leaping on my camel’s throat, more like a jackal than a man, raised his club as if to brain me, his eyes flashing fire, the veins swelling on his dark forehead; but suddenly calming himself, as if by force, he lowered his knotted stick and addressed me:—

“Wretched weigher of poisons,” he exclaimed, “I spare thee, that thou mayest yet further diminish thy countrymen. An Arab knows how to obey—I believe in destiny. If our labour has been in vain, it is Remphan’s will, and he will have it so, in spite of all the plaister-sellers in Judæa. Farewell, and may the blessings of the evil angels, which are curses, be with thee for ever!”

So saying, the vile horse-stealer tumbled me from the dromedary's back, threw my bags of medicines and phials in the sand, and galloped off at a rate incredible to any but those who know the desert.

As I stood rubbing the dust from my robes, and adjusting my sacred phylacteries, now examining my jars to see if any hellebore had been lost, now opening a roll of amulet to see if the precious snake-stone of Lyene were safe, the sleeper whom I had disturbed gravely accosted me.

"Gehazi, son of Elkanah," he said, "be not troubled, for God has laid his hand on the Edomite, and he has returned to his own land."

"Who art thou?" I exclaimed, feeling my pulse as I spoke, to see to what high degree of fever my temporary rage had thrown me, by the same token—my pulse beat quick and thumping, 85 at least.

"I am Lazarus of Bethany, endowed with the power of healing by Jesus of Nazareth."

"From whom?" I said; for I trembled with rage, to think that I saw another of that itinerant's disciples, and I, tired and travel-worn, to return to Jerusalem, the mock of the whole street, and perhaps to be suspected of treason by Pilate himself; looking at him closer, I remarked red marks round his wrists, which were thin and long, as if marked by Roman manacles. "Thou art some runaway from the galleys at Joppa, and art only food for the boatswain's whip."

"These marks," he said, "are from no felon's chain—they are the marks of the grave-clothes of Bethany, from which I was loosed but a week since."

"Ah! a madman," I thought to myself, strayed from the tombs, and afraid of being beaten for stealing sycamore fruit in the valleys—a likely story; so I, to humour him, asked who, forsooth, raised him from the dead.

And he replied, "Jesus of Nazareth, he who healed Bartimæus, the servant of the Cen-

turion—He, the Redeemer, the God manifest in the flesh.”

“Out, madman!” I cried, and turned my face to return to Jerusalem. “Any poor priest of Egypt can cure by stroke and touch. As I am a Pharisee, I swear the grave of this Jesus shall soon be in Hinnom, and his father’s house he made a by-word in Israel.”

“Come, Gehazi, share my meal, and rest, for it is the passover,” said Lazarus, sitting down and drawing a handful of Carob-pods, dates, and dried locusts from his wallet, as a substitute for the roast lamb and bitter herbs.

“I will eat with no madman!” I exclaimed; and, turning, strode away in the direction of Jericho. There I resolved to hire a mule, and start back to Jerusalem before daybreak, intending to remain outside the walls till sunset, and then, bribing a legionary, to steal into my house unobserved.

But I had not got many paces from the black rings of ashes on the sand, when my foot caught in the branch of a thorny creeper, that

had crawled out of the path from a neighbouring thicket, and I fell heavily on my head, and lay insensible. What star was over me I know not, but so it was, and I conceal nothing. My sapphire ring, the Samaritan told me, would preserve me from bruise and fall; but they are liars, all these Samaritans, and nothing but the steel bleeder and the cautery of fire will ever cure them.

When I came to myself I was sitting under a mimosa tree, the fresh shadow falling on me with gracious coolness, for the sun's golden arrows cannot pierce the broad target of its dark boughs. Across the hot sun, without the magic circle of the dusk, the sand lizards shot quick as the shuttles of the silk weavers of Damascus. On the broad purple disks of the stone-thistles near me the bees fretted and fed. I lay with my bleeding head in the lap of some one whom I could not raise myself to gaze at.

I painfully lift my eyes—it is Lazarus watching me, not with scorn or anger, but



as I have seen a shepherd of Nazareth watch a lamb torn by a beast of the wood. Not conscious that my senses had returned, I watched him as he looked fixedly at a jezboa that fed behind us on a distant sand-hill. He speaks—I can hear his words.

“Do good to those that despitefully use you and persecute you; by so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.”

“Are those the words of the Arab poet, Ibn Mejnoun,” I asked with kinder voice, rising and brushing the dust from my saffron-coloured robe as I spoke.

“They are the words of Jesus of Nazareth,” he replied.

“Raca!” I exclaimed—“yet they are good words, and worthy of a better man. Had Eleazar the High-Priest, or Ananias the chief scribe, uttered them, I had held them worthy of a place even in the book of the law.”

“Talk not of the Master and such as Eleazar and Ananias in the same breath,” said Lazarus, with a look of horror. “The Lord,

who is a searcher of hearts, knows that one is a corrupter of virgins, and another the worshipper of idols. Did not one, the third day of last Abib, purchase of thee one drachm of the white powder of Chios, and the other, on the calends of first month, a pound of the narcotic gum of Egypt?"

I started, and he proceeded:—

"All their crimes has God revealed to me ; yet you still doubt that I have power from heaven. Let these signs be witnesses to thy hard and stony heart, for God has sent me to thee."

As he spoke Lazarus stood erect, and raised his hands to heaven ; then, drawing a handful of dates from his goat-skin wallet, and stepping into the sunlight, he flung them into the hot and burning air, which now, though past noon, seemed to quiver and pulse, and almost ready to burst into a consuming flame.

"In the name of God !" he said ; the golden fruit, already falling, turned at once into a cluster of song-birds, and soared up


into the burning azure of the sky, singing as they rose far out of sight, a white cloud, swooping down, seeming to receive them into its soft bosom.

“Very wonderful!” I said; “but such tricks are common in the Arab tents, where, to win the sesterces of travellers, they cut off a child’s head, and restore him again to life; pour out many-coloured sands from the same clay amphora; or make a palm-shoot in a few minutes spring up and bear fruit. Such tricks cheat the wise man’s eye, but not his reason. He knows that what the peasant fool thinks magic is but a shrewd man’s observation of some concealed law. Look here! Here in my pouch is a dead weed—dead these 30 years; for my father—and he’s dead—picked it up by the Red Sea shore. I put it in the water, and it blooms into the rose of Jericho. Look—see! This dry, shrivelled seed, 4,000 years old, found in the jaw of a mummy king at Edfou, I plant it, and lo! in two months a green shoot, the promise of

a latent fruit. I have in these bags gems that guard the wearer from fire and steel, stones that attract iron, and moss that grows in the crystal; yet I claim not to be a god, nor yet a juggler."

"Well said," exclaimed a voice from behind a tamarisk bush; and the next moment stepped out to us an African snake-charmer, a mocking grin on his mouth, a laughing malice in his eyes. I did not then know he was one of the possessed.

"The gentleman with the hollow eyes here, by the good Typhon of the Cataracts, makes too much of his pretty sleight-of-hand. Why, sirs, such tricks wouldn't get a man bread in the forum at Rome, though they do very well for the beggarly wildernesses of this accursed land. I and my snakes here, (and, as he spoke, he pulled two hissing reluctant vipers from a box that was slung round his neck by a chain of ebony and ivory beads) are almost starving for want of audiences in this glum country, where nothing goes down but preaching and



overreaching. If I were Cæsar, I would turn the country into a breeding-ground of beasts for the amphitheatre, and, save your worships, sell all the beggarly chosen of God in the Alexandrian slave-markets. Talk of tricks—why, look here, and Beelzebub take your dates, that are too good to send flying away like that.”

As he spoke, the African suddenly drew a dagger from a fold of his belt of lion’s-skin, and plunged it into his body. The blood spouted from the wound; he fell heavily on the sand. I, who knew all signs of death—the heaving chest, choking breath, glazing eye, quivering lip—said the snake-charmer was dying, and threw myself down beside the body, calling Lazarus, who stood by calm and unmoved.

“Wretch !” I said, “wilt thou let the man bleed to death, and look on as if he were a mere frog some camel’s hoof has crushed ?”

What seemed to me a slight smile passed over the features of Lazarus as I spoke. In

my wrath, forgetting my bruises, I sprang upon the man of Bethany, and would have struck him to the ground; but at that moment the apparently dying man leaped from the ground, with a laugh that was hoarse and grating, and seemed to convulse only his mouth. It was the laugh of the intellect, and not of the heart.

"Oh, oh!" he said, "what a triumph for poor Ozan the snake-charmer, to deceive the great physician of the Street of the Pomegranate—and all with a false parchment belly and a cupful of chicken's blood!"

My rage at the smile of Lazarus, now widening over his face, gave me invention. I turned the juggler's trick into an argument against the miracles of Christ, who, I heard, called us Pharisees—a generation of vipers.

"This fool," I said, turning to the snake-charmer, who was feeding his snakes with scraps of raw chicken's flesh, "declares that he has just been raised from the dead by one Jesus of Nazareth."

"By the god Nilus! but that beats the lie that was so big it took two Grecians to utter it. Why, by Cæsar the divine, and Jupiter Tonans too—and that's a big oath—the fellow would make his fortune story-telling in the tents of Wadymousa—ah—ah! Why, man," he shouted, slapping Lazarus on the back, "I'll give thee sixpence a-day to carry my snakes, and tell lies about these pagans, while I play the double-pipe or the scabellus."

"Son of Shem," said Lazarus, "even the beggar cannot feed on carrion."

"I don't know anything about carrion, or begging either," said the vagrant; "but as for Son of Shem—as you Jews call the Psylli, and those tribes beyond Mauritania—I am no such, but honest Junius Simio of the Suburra, who learnt snake-charming at Denderah when an eagle-bearer of the 10th Legion. Behold!" and, with a scrap of some Roman tragedy, the merry scoundrel, who I found afterwards had just stolen my girdle, made a grimace, threw himself into a mime's attitude, and pulled off a

curly wig, which showed his short black hair underneath, and the light brown of the upper part of his forehead, where the umber-dye had not touched the skin.

“But look here, friend,” he said, turning to Lazarus; “as this wise son of Æsculapius seems to doubt thy mission—and, by the snake-rod of Mercury, I think very justly—give him, I pray thee, a further proof of thy wonder-working power—(see his colour go!” under voice to me). “I have here, in a small camel-hair bag, a horned asp, bought by me this morning from an Egyptian merchant, who had found it in a bale of papyrus. It is extremely deadly, for I have not yet taken out its fangs, and its bite killed a child yesterday in fourteen minutes. (How the fellow is taken aback! By the god Momus, but this beats the Troy games of the Campus!) And here, as a spur to thy somewhat waning courage, take a draught of this pure Chian from my calabash.”

Lazarus replied, “I will abide the creature’s



bite, but I will take no wine, for I am a Nazarene."

"By Jove above, these Jews will kill me with laughing! No pork, no wine, always fasting, lamb and hyssop, bread without leaven, bare temples without images and pretty priestesses—no Bacchus! no Venus! Well, now then for the little fellow with the teeth like lancets, that gives the pain that requires no doctor. (What shall we do with the fool's body?) The story'll make my fortune, by Romulus! (But the fellow will be running: if he does, knock him down and throw him to the Jordan). Now—one, two, three—curse the knot! Gentlemen, take your seats; the play's a-going to begin."

The fellow undid the bag in which the asp coiled and struggled, and, with a jerk, threw the snake into the hands of Lazarus, which were outstretched placidly to receive it. The instant that the strange man of Bethany received the reptile, it rose, with its distended hood and fiery eyes, and bit him through the

finger ; not heeding the pain or the venom, the man stooped and picked it up, and holding it up to his face by the head, looked it earnestly in the eyes. Before that gaze the creature seemed to lose its malignity. It closed its eyes as if wounded, and, then sliding from his hand, fell on the sand, and gliding off, was just entering in a jerboa hole, when a shirike, bearing down from a neighbouring clump of thorny acacia trees, bore it off in its beak.

“There go my hundred pence !” said the snake-charmer, wringing his hands. “Oh, my pence, my pence ! Curse on the asp, and the Jew, and the Egyptian, and the madman, and the doctor ! Curses on myself for wasting my time in such a land as the Jews’ ! But, Sol, here’s revenge ! Ten minutes and the poison works ; then, a clean robe and a fresh shirt, and I’m off to Magdala, for there’s no money to be turned here. Curses on the bird ! the asp that cost me 100 pence—hard pence—100 pence this very

morning. Well, how do you feel, Jew?—bitter taste in the mouth, eh?—eyes hot, tongue parched, pulse quicker—then dry? Nothing! Why, the man knows the secret then, and has virtue; for I saw the fangs go in, and there are the three black marks on his ring finger!”

But the sequel may be easily foreseen. The poison had no power over Lazarus; and, uttering his blessing and prayer for our belief in the one Saviour of mankind, he left us, and passed on towards Edom, the snake-charmer insisting on following so great and good a man, whom Zeus himself must have endowed with the power of working miracles.

I, hiring a mule at a small village near the banks of the Jordan, where I slept, returned by early morning within sight of Jerusalem; then, dismissing my guide and beast, I proceeded to wait for sunset, that I might enter the city unobserved, still enraged at all jugglers, cheats, and despisers of the law.

It was about noon that I reached the foot of the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and, watching

first the mule grow to a mere speck against the horizon, turned into a narrow path, leading to the rock-tomb of a friend, at whose interment I had only the Tuesday before been present. I looked up at the mouth of the cave: it was dark and still as an entrance to Hades. In its cool depth of shadow I determined then to wait for sunset.

Over the stone of the portal was cut—

“Here, in the arms of eternal sleep, as in a bride's, lies  
THOTHMES. Envy him not, for thou too shalt one day  
sleep in those arms.”

For my friend was an Egyptian merchant, an Epicurean and a Sadducee, who believed not the resurrection.

“Here, then,” I pondered to myself, “lies a clay mould in which Jehovah ran the precious fiery essence of the soul; here, to be corroded by damp and heat, to be gnawed by worms and vile insects, lies that body that loved and hated; that lay in the mother's bosom, and the harlot's lap; that trod down the enemy, and succoured the friend; all here


sealed up in a cavern, far from sun and light, to await the great change ; while the poor earth, once so nursed and pampered, passes into flower or star, into cloud or sea."

I was pursuing these reveries, which every man who has stood by a grave must have felt—a feeling of humiliation mixed with that internal kindle of brain and heart which comes at such moments, like an angel voice assuring us of immortality—when a low sound, from a passage leading to the tomb chamber, roused my attention, and filled me at once with alarm and dread. Legends of the vampire spirit that animates the dead thronged into my mind. Fear of personal danger, too, bade me remember that the outlaws of Judea, and slaves flying the cross, sometimes sought refuge in these houses of death and corruption.

Before I had time to think even of flight, a tall gaunt form, swathed in white grave-clothes, strode suddenly out of the dark into the path of golden light that the sun cast through

the doorway. The face was that of a corpse, the forehead was bound with a napkin, while the jaw was tied up loosely with a cloth; the shrivelled arms, white and rigid, had escaped from the swathings; the nails were like claws, the lips were livid.

“I am Thothmes!” cried the figure; “I am the King of the Scarabœi and the Crocodiles. I ride on the fiery-flooded wind of the desert, and chase all night Death, who flies before me on his great black camel. Ho! thou Spirit of the Pyramid, with the gold crown, the scalped skull, and the emerald eyes! Ho! thou Spirit of the Rock-temple, where the mummies of the two Arsinoes wait for the sound of the golden bells of the dead! Dancing girls! come to Thothmes, for he calls ye! I am the prince of the skeletons of the desert; the genii of the poison-flower of the Thebaid know my voice, and so do Moses and the Prophets. Lash the reeds, waves of the Red Sea! Tear them as the river-horse does the spears, or the sea-wolf the net!



Tear the palm trees, salt winds of Sodom !  
for I am Thothmes, prince of the dark  
house !”

Then, seeing me, the half-starved demoniac  
—for such I now perceived the unhappy being  
to be—exclaimed—

“ And who art thou ? What ! Baal—the  
god whose crown is the sun, his weapon  
the rainbow, and his arrows the lightnings ?  
—or Rimmon, who rides on the earthquake,  
whose chase-hounds are the white leprosy  
and the black pestilence ? Embrace me,  
dead king ; for I am Thothmes, prince of the  
skeletons of the desert ; I live on the fat  
night air and the Dead Sea vapours that slay  
the shepherd !”

So saying, he leaped on me, winding his  
bony arms round my neck ; but the moment  
he pressed his cold lips against my burning  
forehead, and before I could escape from his  
noisome breath, or the clammy chill of his  
emaciated body, he had sprung back with a  
howl of rage and astonishment.

“Avaunt!” he cried. “No cavern devil this is, nor fiery Moloch, nor golden stony cold Baal! but a living man, with a live moving heart in his bosom—no blue mould of corruption on his cheek, but warm rose-paint on his flesh. What has he to do in the tomb, which is the dead king’s own—Thothmes’ own?—he who bought it with sobs and death-rattles, and a phial full of tears; giving up for his dark dominion, wife, and love, and home!” Then, foaming at the mouth, he seized me by the throat, and tried to strangle me with a band of his shroud.

Grappling each other—I with a despair that lent me strength, the madman with a frantic fury that his feeble body rendered almost impotent—we reached the door of the cave; we rolled struggling down the sandy bank; we tumbled in a watercourse, down whose dry pebbles we fought and jostled—he trying to blind me by thrusting his thumbs into my eyes, I trying to stab him in the throat with



my iron writing stylus, which luckily I kept hung in a case by my tablets in my girdle.

“Help!” he cried, “for Thothmes, prince of the skeletons of the desert!” and he foamed at the mouth, “help, vultures of the clouds!—help, asps of the sand holes!—help ye the dead against the living, for I am brother of the great crowned Vampire of Gomorrah!”

Already I was at the edge of a steep rock, down which the madman would have certainly hurled me, when, at once, through the dust and glare and heat, I felt a strong hand tear us apart, and drive the madman stunned to the ground with the blow of the butt-end of a short Roman sword.

“Why, Gehazi,” said a horseman, whom at once I knew as a Greek freedman of the Governor’s—one Conon, a wily, quick-witted, vivacious Athenian, whom I had once saved from the hot clutch of a Syrian fever—“what drives you from the herb-furnace, and Charon’s vintage in the Pomegranate Street,

to ramble out here and fight with demoniacs among the tombs? Is this a patient who has come to life again, to have his revenge for all the blood and minæ you drained from him? or did some rare grave-balsam lure you from your drugs and amulets?"

I told him my story, and he laughed till he grew red; all the time, however, employing himself in binding the madman's hands, and attaching them to his stirrup. "What!—thou, learned doctor, to be gulled by a vulgar cheat and a snake-charmer! Why, the poorest galley-slave at the Piræus could take in you Jews. Though you are so fierce and proud—but there—there—no hot reply: Zeus didn't make all men Greeks, and Hermes be thanked for it; for if all beasts were lions, what food would be left us men? But now—quick, doctor—mount behind me; for, at a turn of the road, a light Gallic car waits for us—the Governor's wife is ill at ease, and needs your help. I was bid follow thee even to Jericho; the Governor has been fearing a sedition

of your countrymen, and all the Dragon legion are under arms, as well as three companies of our Spanish horse. By the hair of Berenice—and that's a star—there is no hopes of lettered ease in this dismal city, where to go out after nightfall is to ensure a Jewish knife in your liver, if you don't march wrapped all over in Spanish steel. Only last night Zoe sends me a scented billet. I go out at the appointed hour; my steel must needs shine—a coat made of moon-mirrors—and I am stopped by a sentinel, who thinks I must be Herod himself in disguise, or the rogue Barabbas again, fresh from the plunder of a palace.”

“What has become of that Barabbas?” said I.

“Barabbas, why he was taken last calends, for carelessly bleeding a young knight at the door of the temple, and was to have been crucified to-day at noon; but Pilate, wishing to be talked of by the rabble, releases him, for he is a pet in the cook shops, and crucifies in his stead one Jesus, a street preacher, who

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has been exciting some idle fishermen of Galilee to leave their honest labour and take to the word-nets of the philosopher. Poor silly men! but they must be made an example, for he calls himself King of the Jews, and has deceived many. The poor man's companions were Rufus and Simon—the one a horrid snake-eyed villain, for poisoning his master, a vile tax-collector of Samaria; and the other for the far worse crime of breaking off the head of an image of our blessed Emperor Tiberius, the one that is to be placed, by the order of Sejanus, in the inner court of the Temple, and sticking on it a satyr's."

"Never," I said, "while Zebulon and Gad can lift a spear."

"No treason, friend Doctor, for learned men do sometimes mount that tree without leaves."

I could scarcely, I confess, contain my joy, to hear of the punishment of that man of Nazareth.

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We were just entering the gate of Judgment, as the portal was called, by which pri-

soners were led outside the walls to execution, I was in trouble, for I had not eaten yesterday of the Passover, nor offered up my fourteen prayers, according to the laws of Rabbi Shareza, when the challenge of the sentinel and the ring of his grounded spear compelled me to dismount from my car and await a cavalcade, which was slowly approaching up the steep and unpaved street. A coxcomb in the guard-house put down "*Apicius de Re Coquinaria*," and looked languidly out, coaxing his scented hair, and playing with the scale straps of his coat of mail. With a sickly drawl, which implied the languor of the debauchee, he hummed one of Anacreon's voluptuous songs, as he pointed out the criminals to a brother officer, who was examining a sapphire ring through the light of a looped window.

"Oh, that!" said he, "is Joshua, or Jesus, a Nazarene, who tried to make himself king, at least so a Pharisee told me, for I don't know a word of their Hebrew jargon—disgusting

language. That other is the gladiator, Rufus, a fellow all scars and gashes—one who kills a lion in two blows, but has been fool enough to poison a greater rascal than himself—so to the cross with him; and that rogue Barabbas got off. Well, so the world wags—for one the hook and the stairs, for another the purple and the nard.”

“I will wait here,” I thought, “and see this preaching cheat, to give him the Satan’s blessing, which is a curse, and the Devil’s gift, which is a blow;” for I hated him to my heart, and my heart was black with envy, and my blood boiling for revenge for yesterday’s vexations, dangers, and delusions—I, who would in my better moments lift the fly from the water-jug, and labour to keep the night moth from my study-lamp. How this envy corrupts the heart.

There was one blast of the horn, as a centurion, reining his horse of the Pannonian plains, came leading on a procession of spearmen and shouting rabble, who flung

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stones and mud at the three prisoners, who were toiling in a burning sun under the weight of their crosses, with all the cruelty with which the dregs of a city always hunt down the victim of the hour.

I could see for a moment the angry up-turned faces, laughing, grimacing, sneering. I could hear the shouts of "Hail, King of the Jews!" as an idiot-prince whom they drove before them waved his reed and robe in mockery of the Nazarene.

Yes, I had only eyes for him. I expected to see a brazen-faced, bull-necked demagogue of the market-place, like the Egyptian that had led out into the wilderness 4000 men, who were murderers to a man, a fellow with a voice like a wild beast, a sensual lip, and half-shut cruel eyes; but I beheld a face as of an angel, pale and wrung with suffering, stained with blood from the crown of thorns that a brute butcher of the Lower Market had thrust with a curse upon his head, his eyes languid, but pure and bright, with a super-

natural light, as he bent under the weight of a ponderous wooden cross, that made even the soldiers whisper in pity. And on either side of him, singing vile songs, and cheering one another, with curses and execrations and jests about fighting Charon for his fare, came the thief and the gladiator.

But at that moment I felt no pity, I rejoiced to see the pain of the smooth-faced impostor, as I deemed him, and, pushing forward through the soldiers, I struck him on the half-naked back, still red with the lashes. He turned, and in a low voice said—

“Tarry thou till I come.”

And as the centurion shouted to push on—for it was past the ninth hour—I fell back in a swoon; I felt the judgment was upon me, and that it was indeed the Son of God. As I fell, I heard a soldier say, “Run to the barrack for the myrrh and the wine; and mind and bring the dice, for his robe is without a seam, and worth a good penny;” and the last object I remember seeing was a boy



running past me with a roll of parchment, and on it was written, "The King of the Jews!"

And when I woke and looked up, a great darkness was over the sky, veined with bars of fire; but, against a lingering sickly whiteness to the east, where the skull-place rose, I could see three tall black crosses; and as I rose to go home, a centurion rode slowly by up the street, and I heard him say to a companion, "Yes! truly this was the Son of God!" A crowd of women passed me, weeping, as I went home. I was immortal, and I was accursed; but I bore no brand like Cain. Doomed, I felt, to inhabit an endless series of bodies, and to survive all love and hope—nation and home—wife and children! To me death was to bring no respite from suffering, no rest from care and pain, no opiate for sorrow, no balm for grief. The Messiah of my people had come, and I had spurned him, as I might have done a beggar in the street! THEN I WAS FOR EVER ACCURSED!

## CHAPTER II.

## MY LIFE AT ROME.

It was a cloudless day in August, when, just at the fourth hour, our Alexandrian spice vessel, the *Canopus*, put into the bay of Naples. I, a prisoner, sent to Tiberius by order of the Procurator, Pilate, on suspicion of being more than half a Christian, ran up from the cabin, at the sound of a cry that made me at first think some disaster had happened to the ship.

My first astonishment at the beautiful bay—"the mirror of Venus," as a poet on board called it—blue and golden, as alternately the sunbeam stretched out its golden sceptre over

it, or the shadow fell on it cool and dark—was soon dissipated by my greater surprise at seeing the whole crew, grim captain and bluff sailors—even the fat flute-player we used to laugh at—all standing on the poop clothed in long white robes, and crowned with garlands, shouting with one voice, “By you we live!” I saw that every eye was turned on the purple awning of a ten-oared Liburnian galley, whose parti-coloured sails and gilded gunwale rendered it conspicuous, as belonging to some Roman of high rank. With a burst of flutes and horns, its great gilded oars began suddenly to move, as if animated by one common impulse of motion, as the brilliant vessel flew glittering past us over the waters towards Baia.

“By Plutus, how it shines!” said a Syrian money-lender.

“She skims the waves resplendent as the vessel in which Paris bore away his Helen,” said the poet.


“And what use,” said a rough Epirote ailor, “are such gimcracks? A good strong

Cilician beak would go smash into them, and break them up like so many sea-biscuits. Give me good oak plank, with a streak of red cinnabar, or something of that sort, that'll stand the lash and the roll of the sea-lions off Calpe."

"Is that a Consul's galley?" I said to one of the revellers, whose rose crown had just blown into the water.

"Consul?" said the fellow, angrily. "Bless the Jew!—why, it is the holy Tiberius himself; and surely he is a god, if ever there was one."

"Now, look here, friend Jew," said a friendly young fop, who, during all the voyage, had been teasing me for antidotes against sea-sickness, and, draggle-tailed and helpless, had been the sport of the hardier sailors and older travellers. Now in sight of land, he had gained courage, and resumed all his foppery, his curled wig, his light summer rings, his *soupçon* of rouge, his scarlet Gallic cloak, and his signet, a beautiful work of Grecian art.



“Allow me, friend Jew,” he said, in a shrill, affected voice, and with a profusion of Greek phrases and scraps of verse, “to serve as chorus, and explain to you the places that surround this triumphant work of Poseidon’s art. I need scarcely tell you that this city is Naples, where the illustrious poet, Virgil—of whom, I daresay—I shudder to say—you know nothing—wrote his ‘Æneid.’ By-the-bye, mind I show you a remarkable epigram I wrote upon it. That purple mountain that pierces heaven, and is now helmeted and feathered with a crimson cloud, is Vesuvius: under it lie the giants whom Jupiter chained and bound. That little pile of rock out at sea to the right, crowned with a diadem of towers and a Pharos, is Capri, where the Emperor lives. Those are his twelve villas—Jove, Mars, Juno, and all of them. Yes—twelve. The Pharos faces the temple of Sorrentum, on the opposite shore. You see it there—a white, marble-glittering speck, standing out from the gray olives and green pome-

granates like a nestling dove. Through the thin violet air you can see from that great wall the land of Circe, that Ulysses fled from. To the south, far, are the fiery isles of Æolus, and the chestnut heights of Sicily. Away there, from Circe's promontory, you see, far as the three temples of the city of roses, Pæstum. On those blue Falernian ridges grow the richest wines that ever scented an amphora; and further on, with snowy crests, rise the Samnite Apennines and the Lucanian mountains."

I, who had drunk deeply of Roman lore, forgot for a moment my burden of woe in gazing at this scene of beauty. Sea of jewel clearness, sky of magic transparency, mountain, plain—all that can carry the mind into infinity was there.

"And God saw that it was good!" I exclaimed.

"By the twelve gods!" said the Roman, "I would rather be ædile in this dusty Naples than king of such a land of mud and sand as

that Egypt, where, if you even set your dog at an old woman's cat, you are stoned to death by the rabble, who call everything sacred. By-the-bye, did you ever hear what our 53 did at Sycue? Why, they caught a fellow who was stealing one of the silver cohort eagles, and they shut him up, and kept him for three days on sacred onions. But the Governor at Thebes got hold of the thing, and here I am—bound, I expect, for Charon's ferry, unless Mercury helps me. But what's that?—there—no, there—from the Emperor's galley? One flag—two flags. Oh! that's the signal for us poor devils to come and meet the Emperor at Baiæ. Now, the good genius of the old Manlian *gens* help me, or my last dice is thrown, and the 53 lose a good judge of ostriches' tongues."

"In half-an-hour," whispered to me a Greek philosopher, arrested for seditious haranguing at Alexandria, "you will make acquaintance with what Apollonius beautifully calls, 'that kind of beast called a tyrant.'"

"No whispering!" said a sailor, pushing us apart.

"He who bears misfortune like a god is already more than half divine," said the Stoic.

"No mutiny on board ship!" said the surly sailor, in whose way we had got, and striking the Greek a heavy blow over the back with the knotted end of a rope.

In a moment the Stoic, forgetting his philosophy, roared with pain, and, seizing the sailor by the hair, flung him over a heap of buckets that stood near.

"To revenge is human," I said, laughingly ;  
"but to forgive becomes the gods."

"To resist oppression," said the Stoic, slinking away rather chapfallen, "is fitting all but the slave."

An hour's sail brought us back to Baiæ. Accustomed to the great palaces of Herod on Mount Zion, the mountains of marble that formed the Holy Temple of Mount Moriah, and the great viaduct of the Tynpœum that



leaped over the valley and linked the two, I was still astonished. The huge moles of Puteoli and Baiæ led on the eye to the Lucrine lake, and the distant fabulous avenues that lay beyond. Hercules, who was said in earlier ages to have thrown up a dyke on this coast, could scarcely, in all the might of a demigod, have imagined such miles of palaces as the Roman voluptuaries had here, raised in endless terraces, that the sea chafed at, but could not destroy. Bath-rooms, and colonnades, and porticoes, to catch the fresh sea air and expel the sun, arose in endless succession. Palanquins and chariots thronged the white roads; vessels gay with streamers encircled the imperial galley, now still at her moorings; the shore resounded with the sound of drums and horns; spear-heads glittered on the mole; horses dashed past, either bringing or departing with messages to Rome — the great city that lay only two days' journey from us over that distant poisonous plain of the Pontine Marshes.

"And here is that Leviathan," I thought; "and what am I in his sight but a brother of dragons and a companion of owls?" But then again, in my despondency, I thought of the prayer of Isaiah, and sang, "O Lord, be gracious unto us, we have waited for thee; be thou our salvation also in the time of trouble;" and I was comforted.

"Oh, by Bacchus," said the fop, fawningly, waiting for the boat that was to take us on shore, "if you must sing, give us, 'Daphne, stay me with thine eyes,' or some pretty love thing, and none of those Hebrew dirges; for when a man's thinking of the lictors he wants something lively and epicurean. Curse these Stoics, I haven't lived half a life yet!"

We passed through long galleries of busts and statues—the treasures of Athens and of Corinth; we passed rooms through whose doorway I could see costly citron tables and rich couches, inlaid with amber and tortoise-shell; the floors were starred with Mosaic, or paved with hard slabs of the red and green,

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marble of Numidia. The walls, sometimes black, sometimes of a pale straw colour, often azure, were painted with the loves of dancing nymphs, fluttering garlands of birds and beasts, and chains of flowers. Here was Perseus rescuing Andromeda, there Icarus trying on his waxen wings.

"And how is Caprineus?" said a man behind me in a low voice to an attendant soldier, who had recognized him—"still discoursing who was Hecuba's mother with the grammarians, what tunes the Sirens played, or I suppose still writing death-warrants for his favourite, Sejanus?"

"Hist!" said the man—"the Jew hears us."

"Callipedes," said the other, "is just as usual, always starting for Rome, but never venturing far from his den, with the green ditch round it. May the gods blind me if I believe he is not sinking fast; for he only drinks one amphora a-day, and that of Augustus's Setine; he's mad now about building,

nothing goes down but plans for cupolas and forums, till I am sick of the sight of a fellow with a roll of paper in his hand—still anything to keep him from murder.”

As the gossips were thus venting their spleen at their Emperor's expense, we suddenly entered the room in which the Emperor stood surrounded by his builders, Greek astrologers and grammarians. In the background were several tributary kings, whose suits were pending at his court. They thought themselves his guests. They were, in fact, his prisoners, and he their jailor. Some attendants were measuring the doorways, while bronzed workmen stood by, ready to turn this villa, which had once belonged to Lùcullus, into some fresh form of grandeur and luxury.

Advancing with slow and solemn steps, my companion saluted Tiberius as Augustus and Imperator, but he did not for a moment even turn his back.

When he did, I saw he was an old man,

with once handsome features, now grown red and swollen, and spotted with excess. His eyes were large, fixed, and severe. He held his neck stiff and erect, and eyed us frowning and in silence—looking occasionally, from time to time, at the fawning builder's plan. I observed he was bald, and wore a laurel crown. In the prime of life he must have been robust and hale, for his chest was broad and his hands large and strong; but he was now shrunk and withered, and the paper shook as he held it. I saw at once the suspicious, pedantic, reserved, tyrant of Capri. He whispered for a moment, with an attendant, to whom he handed a lyre, which he had held in his left hand; and then, stealing towards us, he fixed his eye full on me, and addressed me in an angry voice, as he called for a plumb-line to make some fresh measurement.

“Are you,” he said, “the god-hater, who denies the divinity that eleven cities of Asia, and that all the world besides,

are so eager to adore—by the Lemures I will”—and he swept the air with his hand, as if he held a sword.

“Lord and master,” said the ambassadors of the eleven cities, pressing forward from a throng of freedmen and courtiers, “still more and more justly will you hate these Jews when you learn that they alone of all mankind have refused to sacrifice for your safety.”

“My Lord and master,” I said, falling on my knees, “we are slandered”—for I saw his tiger’s eye darken, and feared instant death—“we have sacrificed for you whole burnt-offerings, not feasting on the victims, but making holocausts.”

“Be it so,” he said—“you sacrifice for me, but not to me,” and he tore the plan with his teeth, in the outburst of his rage. “Here, Magasbas,” to an African slave, “for though I am a god, I drink Falernian,” up to the gold.

Ere I could stammer a word of excuse, or explain that I myself was no rebel, but a quiet physician of Jerusalem, the Emperor

had hurried off to another apartment to see the plans for a new tepidarium !

We hurried after him, backwards and forwards, up stairs and along galleries, the ambassadors pointing and mocking at me as we went.

The windows of the chamber, filled with a transparent stone, that admitted light, but not the wind, and tempered the sun, astonished me even in my fear.

All of a sudden, at the end of a gallery, he turned on me, and said, "Pray, sir, why do not the Jews eat pork?"

At this the ambassadors burst into such an astonished roar of laughter at the Emperor's wit, that they had to be forced back, amid the shrugs and corrective looks of the attendants.

I saw the Emperor face about, and I seized my opportunity.

"Every nation," I said, hurriedly, "has its own customs, even our colonies ; the Greeks have their mysteries. Some na-

tions refrain from eating the flesh of lambs."

"Quite right," said Tiberius, drily, looking round for applause; "the meat's bad."

Again the ambassadors roared, and Tiberius laughing too, the attendants also laughed; I alone stood angry and vexed.

"Laugh, man," said the dandy, in my ear; "laugh, or your life isn't worth an hour's purchase, and you'll be a sop in that cursed yellow Tiber, perhaps, even before me."

Roused by this I smiled mournfully.

Instantly the Emperor relaxed his iron face, and said, as he shaded his eyes to criticise a fresco picture of two Cupids drawing a Biga that was driven by a butterfly,

"Men who think me no god, are, after all, more unfortunate than criminal—let the poor Jew go."

The moment he had said these words the expression of every face around altered. Some made way for me—others offered me a place in the front rank—the fop kept jogging my elbow and instructing me to keep my face in



a smile, or I should still float in that cursed pea-soup river.

While I was still trembling, like a man just snatched from the edge of a precipice, one of the train stepped forward.

But before I knew whether I was even yet saved from the jaws of this monster, who gnawed the world, a rhetorician of Cos, a loud-voiced, conceited declaimer, vain and empty, advanced, and tucking up his mantle in the Grecian fashion, began, in the name of the people of further Spain, to entreat that they might be deemed worthy to erect a temple to worship Tiberius.

“The best of mortals, as Hercules and Bacchus among the Greeks, and Romulus among the Romans, had sought and gained such a place among the Immortals. For the hopes of such an apotheosis Augustus had lived a hero’s life; but Tiberius, by nature almost divine, had won the crown before the genius of death had reversed his torch.”

Then with a grand flourish and a look

round to secure applause, he concluded, "Princes," he said, "may command the present, but it should be their dearest ambition thus to take pledges for the future—indifference to fame is indifference to virtue."

To all this harangue Tiberius replied with a single smile at the Greek accent with which the coxcombical orator pronounced his Latin. He even drew out his ivory tablets and made what I suppose were notes of the most flagrant anachronisms. The flattered grammarian, thinking the Emperor was taking notice of his speech, strutted about in a way that roused even the courtier's mirth.

"By Bacchus, is this thy Silenus?" said the Emperor, selecting from the crowd a squat Ædile, who, very uncomfortable in superb Sidonian robes, was hiding his confusion behind my friend the fop. "Speak, man; on what bean-soup errand art thou come, for I'll swear *thou* art no shunner of pork?"

"This man," said a dignified chamberlain,

looking at the fat country magistrate with extreme contempt, "is an Ædile of the once famed Ilium" (every one stared, for one more unlike Priam never walked), "and he comes as an ambassador from that town, to sympathize with your highness on the death of the illustrious Germanicus."

I never saw on human face so horrid a shadow as passed over the face of Tiberius at the mention of that hated name. In a moment, as by an effort of habitual reserve, the deadly purple that had darkened his cheeks faded, however, into a still more ghastly paleness, a strange smile brightened his stealthy and blood-shot eyes, and with a low bow he said, turning to the perspiring Ædile—

"Tell the people of Ilium I thank them, and beg to express my sincere regret at the loss of their much-lamented townsman, Hector."

Then, with a scowl of rage, the Emperor and his train of stewards, builders, and workmen, poured out of the chamber.

The *Ædile* was wonderful to contemplate. I could see that he hardly knew whether to treat Tiberius's answer as a sneer or a compliment; but the alarmed looks of those around him, and their ominous whispers, soon convinced him of the truth; he stood like one who had just been scared by the Medusa's head, and feels his flesh fast hardening into stone.

The fop seized the opportunity (rather unseasonably) to ask the unhappy man if it was not true that the quails about the Scamander were of a rare flavour; and the rhetorician, now the centre of a crowd of flatterers—one of whom, with loathsome servility, was brushing some pretended dust from his sleeve—bade the *Ædile* be of good courage, and he would befriend him with Cæsar.

While we were all occupied with our mingled hopes and fears, and were discussing the Emperor's smiles and gestures, the stentorian voice of a Liburnian usher suddenly awed us into silence.

“Tiberius, the princeps, commands that

Colophon, the grammarian of Cos, for daring to address him by word of mouth, contrary to the Manlian law, be banished for thirty years to the island of Melita, in the Ægean; he also dismisses the Ædile of Ilium, Julius Bessus, and presents him with a beryl cantharus, to keep as a remembrance of his painful journey."

Immediately the fat Ædile's face gathered up into pleasant puckers, and the grammarian's whitened into that of a corpse.

"Oh! my wife and children!" he cried; "what, no delay?"

But the next moment two strong Capadocian attendants tied the wretched man's hands behind him, and pushed him before them to the doorway.


As he passed through he turned, and exclaimed with a sigh, "Farewell, friends; a dying man salutes ye!"

I must say this for the fussy, good-natured Ædile, that I saw him run after Colophon and push a purse into his girdle. I wish I could,

for the credit of humanity, however, suppress the fact that the moment the kind Trojan's back was turned, one of the guardsmen snatched the bag from its receptacle, and wagging it in the orator's eyes, grinned at his companion.

Perhaps a tedious hour had elapsed before I was called by an attendant to wait upon the Emperor in his library. I found him writing; his favourite dwarf, ludicrously called Atlas, was sorting some rolls and parchments, the newest works just arrived from Rome, the latest despatches from the East; the drip, drip of a bronze water-clock was the only sound that broke the silence.

The Emperor scarcely noticed my presence as I entered, but went on muttering, "I have got a wolf by the ears, but the toils are ready—let's see" (and he counted on his fingers)—"on the Rhine eight legions, three in Iberia, Africa two, and two in Egypt, a legion at Antioch, and one at Cesarea, two on the Danube, and two in the Isles; two more in Dalmatia, and then the Suban and Prætorian



Guards, if they do not play false, and Macro is but true."

Then he looked up, and called an officer who was writing at a neighbouring desk.

"More complaints, Piso, of this Pilate—a carpenter's son of Nazareth executed; just when we should be firm in the East, to strike the one blow that saves all. Bid him be recalled; write to-night—and send him to the Alps—that will cool his insolence, after the sun of Syria; but no more state affairs now, Atlas, till after cæna."

Then suddenly glancing at his tablets—"Oh, notes made by the delatores (spies) during the voyage of the 'Serapis,' that, during a storm off Corsica, Lucius Balbus, cornet in the 10th legion, vowed to Neptune to offer his hair in the temple of that god—that at the same time Mycon, a Stoic philosopher, of Alexandria, also a state prisoner, vowed, if he got safe to land, to fight a lion in the amphitheatre.

"These being my friends, I would not,"

said the Emperor, with his usual devilish smile, "that such pious vows as theirs were broken. No, by the gods, let the fop be shaven, and the Stoic sent instantly to the lions at Rome; and when the fop is shaved, despatch him to help his fellow-traveller—for a Libyan lion is work enough for two such men as our philosopher. No parleying—you heard what I said, Piso—to the lions with them—away!"

I stepped forward, and, falling on my knees, caught hold of the Emperor's robe, and prayed for the soldier's life.

"By Zeus," he said, "but a Jew makes a better friend than a Roman—let the fool then be sent to Syene."

"He comes from there," said the attendant.

"Then let him be sent back there, for I know no worse punishment; and tell him to pray twice a-day for my health, for I have a cursed cough that torments my chest. Begone! am I no Cæsar, that I am to be obeyed by no one? Begone, slave, or beware the carp tank!"



I shuddered at these words, for I had been told, during my voyage, not only of the fact that the Emperor delighted to watch victims writhing in the waves under the rocks of Capri, but of one wretched slave whom he had thrown into the fish-tank, where he was devoured by pike kept there for the use of the imperial kitchen.

He saw my terror, and smiled—again that dreadful smile!

“Do you like poetry?” he said suddenly; “you Jews, I hear, have no poetry.”

I humbly alluded to our great poets, and quoted him a part of the triumphant psalm of Miriam, so full of martial exultation, having indeed turned it, during the voyage, into iambics.

“Sophos,” he said, with a pedantic air, that affected omniscience, “but I object to that word ‘emblema,’ it is mere Greek, and not pure Latin. I have here by me a mere—a trifling work of my own, written in the manner of Messala Corvinus. It is though hardly worth your hearing—it’s only a dia-

logue between a thrush and an oyster, a dispute settled by the interference of Juno."

I listened with all the interest I could assume, but my applause was hardly rapturous enough for one so cloyed with flattery. "I observe," he said, "the elaborate construction of our verse escapes you."

I could see that all this time some trouble preyed upon him, and would not let him rest. His eyes were always wandering to the door or the window. His clammy fingers were feverishly pulling off his rings, or fumbling in his breast as for some concealed weapon. He opened now his pencease—now loosened or tightened his robe. All of a sudden he clicked his fingers, and a black slave entered.

"Cygnus," he said, "call Caius hither, request him to bring the despatches from Sejanus, and bid Macro order out the guard, for I go at once to Rome."

"To Rome!" stammered the slave, and disappeared.

Sejanus, I knew, was the dreaded favourite, now at the climax of his power, and about, it was rumoured, to become son-in-law to the Emperor. I wondered what had led me into the confidence of the tyrant, who every now and then spoke to me with a kindness unusual to his cold and reserved nature.

Preceded by an usher, Caius, generally known by the soldiers' nickname of Caligula, entered. The son of Germanicus was tall and thin; his limbs shrunk and lank, his walk shambling, his head prematurely bald, his complexion sallow, his voice shrill and harsh, his handsome features deformed by a scowl and writhing expression.

"What news, Caius, from our beloved city?" said Tiberius, in reply to Caligula's humble salutation.

"The best news in the world," he replied, with shrill and excited gesticulation, as if lashing a horse. "The green are everywhere victorious, and talk of building a fresh circus in the fourteenth region."

"Bah!" said Tiberius, "what trash is this! Leave the red and blue charioteers to the tavern gossips, and such fools as Verus and Milo. What tidings bring you from our Sejanus—our beloved Sejanus?"

"Our beloved Sejanus," replied Caligula, looking keenly from under his eyebrows, "not having room on earth, must needs jostle you on Olympus. Not satisfied with the consulship, the senate have just decreed an altar to Clemency and Friendship, and by its side images of their Jupiter" (bowing to Tiberius), "and of this Prometheus are to be placed."

"A second Patroclus to a second Achilles," said Tiberius.

"He prays, also, that the gods may soon bless him, and enable him to visit his dear father-in-law, and his equally dear bride, Livilla—whose indisposition grieves him to the soul—at the tranquil nest of the muses, Capri."

Caligula turned aside as if to conceal a slight smile at the obvious insincerity of the crafty favourite's letter.

“And what say the private letters of the delatores (spies)?” said Tiberius, impatiently —“what is the talk of the forum and market-places?”

“They say that the proudest families of Rome—the Manlii, Camilli, Cincinnati, and Sevii—wait like slaves at the doors of this modern Tarquin; that the blues and greens have vowed rival races in his honour; that all the flat-nosed gladiators of the fencing schools are swearing to fight in the games on his next birth-day; that altars are raised before his pictures, and sacrifices are being offered in all quarters of the city.”

“He is the shadow of the Emperor,” said Tiberius, calmly, without moving a muscle, “and the bean-eaters of the Suburra love its shelter.”

Long distrust of mankind had given the Emperor an iron fixity of face, that furnished no indication of feeling for the keenest physiognomist to observe.

“Seven hundred and fifty-two years,” he

continued, "since Rome was founded, and never before lived the man whose robe the Fabii and Mamerci ever knelt together to kiss. Such a minister is as the vine to the elm."

"Or the ivy to the oak," said Caligula; but Tiberius took no heed of the sarcasm. "Here is, also, the last fable of your freed-man, Phædrus, one which is the talk of all the cookshops of the herb-market. This letter tells me that, at the baths and the law-courts—at temples even during the sacrifices—this fable is buzzed about amid the laughter of a thousand mouths and ten thousand eyes."

"Read it!" said Tiberius. "Something against the object of our favour, or it would not, by Hercules, I know, go down with the greasy rabble, whose only cry is, 'Bread and games!'"

With a keen smile of intelligence, Caligula read aloud the following well-known fable, which a crafty Greek intended as a satire on the reigning favourite, Sejanus, at a time when plainer truth would have brought the

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writer to the Tarpeian Hill or the fatal stairs.

“A certain jackdaw, puffed up with vanity, tricked himself out with the stray feathers of a peacock, which he found dropped upon the straw of a farmyard. Elated by his gaiety, the foolish bird mixed with a flock of the proud birds of Juno, and strutted about as if their equal, or even their very king, elected by Jove. For a time the peacocks took no notice of the intruder; but, at last, provoked by his insolence and assumption, they fell upon him, beak and claw, in a moment stripped him of all his borrowed finery, and finally drove him away cruelly bleeding and half dead.”

“Half dead—very well!” cried a parasite of Caligula’s.

“Well for a Thracian,” said Tiberius; “but the fable is full of old phrases from Ennius, quite out of date. I will re-write the thing for him, throw in a little more allegory, and turn it into flowing alcaics.”

“Flowing alcaics!” said the parasite, whose business it was to echo. “Sophos!” (bravo).

"But, Agrippa," said Tiberius, turning round abruptly, with the air of a man who snaps a brittle net.

I could see that the Emperor was leaping at the throat of an overwhelming thought.

I looked up, and at once recognized, in the commanding figure that pressed through the doorway, where the more favoured guards and officers waited, watching me as I stood a spectator of the imperial conferences, Agrippa, the grandchild of the cruel Herod, the brother of the beautiful Herodias, the claimant of the Jewish throne, and the favourite companion of Caligula. His oriental features were imperious and beautiful, his chin was full, his eyes were dark and lustrous, his bearing that of one who, accustomed to unqualified obedience, found it difficult to conceal his contempt for the herd of pimps and slaves that filled the court of a Roman palace. His very step was lighter and more free than that of these conquerors of the world, who trembled at the voice of a dying old man.



"I find it difficult," said Tiberius, "to converse freely with this Jew, who is, I find, a learned physician of your Jerusalem," said Tiberius to Agrippa. "I would have you ask him" (for I had affected to know but little Latin, in order to escape the tyrant's interrogation) "whether the star of—" (here he whispered, and pointed to a horoscope marked with Chaldaic characters on the table)—"and mine are not, as Thrassillus, my seer, tells me, antagonistic."

Agrippa instantly replied, that he had fresh despatches from Syria to submit to the Emperor. He had discovered that Cæsarea could bear an annual tax of ten millions more sesterces; but he craved the dismissal of the proconsul Lucius Balbus, who had persecuted the Jews at Alexandria, and who had been there three times the usual term of proconsular stay. (Balbus I knew as an insolent creature of Sejanus, but one not hostile to my countrymen).

An unconscious glance of my eye caught

the attention of Agrippa, who returned it with a look of hatred.

“I can tell fables as well as Phædrus,” said Tiberius. “Listen, Agrippa, and observe the purity of my Latin, for your own pronunciation is not quite perfect :—‘A number of flies once settled on a soldier’s wound, and a compassionate passer by the camp would have brushed them away. To his astonishment, the sufferer bade him refrain for the love of Jove ; ‘For,’ said he, ‘these flies have been at it ever since Prandium, and are beginning now to be bearable ; but, if you drive them off, they will be instantly succeeded by new comers, with keener stings and fresher appetites.’”

The courtiers laughed as the Emperor concluded ; Caligula screamed, and the parasite echoed, “Fresher appetites !” as if he could not restrain his delight.

Agrippa, ever cool and self-concentrated, occupied himself during the buzz of praise and compliments in bidding me, in Hebrew,

tell the Emperor that much danger awaited him from Saturn, under whose influence that nameless person's house of life seemed to be, according to the Chaldaic diagram.

"As the Lord liveth, and as my soul liveth!" I exclaimed, wringing my hands, "oh, Agrippa! I know nothing of the juggling art of the Chaldeans."

"Miserable cheat!" he said, drawing me into a corner, and squeezing my wrist with a clutch that made me bend with pain, "dare to refuse thy king, and thy blood shall be poured out this very night as a sacrifice to devils! Blab! and I will declare thee a well-known poisoner, and thou shalt go feed the fish that swarm round Capri!"

"By the wringing of his hands, you see," said Agrippa, turning to the Emperor, "that this astrologer sees much evil in the stars."

"By Him that sitteth between the Cherubim, my lord Agrippa!" I said, still in Hebrew, supplicatingly, "I cannot do this great wickedness and sin against God!"

"What says the man? He appears troubled," said Tiberius.

"He declares that death is indicated by the star Mars, and the Pleiades convince him that the danger is but five days hence, and that it comes from ——"

"But why does the sage turn away?"

"He is lost in thought." "Dog!" he whispered to me, in Hebrew, "say from Rome, or thou diest to-night by my hand."

"From Rome," I said, mechanically. I saw the Emperor shudder, and close his tablets with a clash. I little knew on what fresh crime he had just then determined.

"The Rubicon must then be crossed," he muttered, in an under breath, that few who stood near him could hear.

"What name was that to-day, Caius?" Tiberius said, leaping on his feet and calling for his litter. "We will to Rome to-night; we must get as far as Appii Forum, or at least to the sixth mile-stone. What! are we to have vipers hatched under our very pillows? No. But

these are no words—I am not well, gentlemen—I must to Rome—what, a pet fox grown dangerous!—clear the room! I have had no sleep; keep out that detestable sunlight, it burns my brain, to see it dance on the water in the court.” Then the Emperor threw himself on a couch and called for wine.

“Kneel to kiss his hand,” said Agrippa in my ear; “and contrive to touch his pulse.”

I did so, and whispered in Hebrew that it was low and feeble. A glance of triumph leaped up in his eye, and he made a signal almost imperceptible even to Caligula’s stealthy dissimulation, no outburst of the Emperor could ever throw him off his guard. It was said of him afterwards that he was the best servant and worst master that ever lived.

“Tell him,” said Agrippa, turning to me imperiously, and still speaking in Hebrew—for the Emperor was now engaged in listening to a number of lampoons, with which his suspicious nature delighted to vex itself daily—

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"that yesterday you saw a white owl killed by a butcher bird, and that that is an omen of the noble being in danger from the base."


"I cannot, and will not, sin thus against God and my own soul," I answered.

"Refuse," he said, "and thou shalt be thrown at once into the slave prison, or sent for sale to the trainers of the gladiators. Thou canst go to no part of the world but my long hand will seize thee. In the furthest Libya even my poisons will taint sure as thy asp, or my invisible arrows pierce thy heart."

"Drive me not to despair, O Agrippa," I cried; "for even the worm turns, even the nest-bird pecks at the serpent."

"Another word," he said, twitching my cloak fiercely, "and I will splash the wall with thy brains, thou minister of Pluto."

"My lord Tiberius," I said, rushing forward, and falling on my knees, to kiss the hem of the Cæsar's robe. "Imperator, prince, protector of the weak, save me from this



fierce noble, in whose sight I am but as the dust of the earth."

"By Hercules, what slave of mine dares to threaten one who has proved himself a wise physician (though a Jew), and a good judge of poetry; some sweeper of the hall, I dare swear, whose sceptre is his palm-brush, and whose only rival is the porter. Name him, fellow! Is it my strong Thracian, who can sweep a sheep in two at one blow of his sword; or our burly Ligurian, who can fell a bull at a buffet?"

"It is neither of these, great Emperor," I said, veiling my face; "but the one that stands beside you," pointing to the grandchild of Herod.

"What! thou, Agrippa?"

"Nay, sire; I did but ask the fellow, who I doubt is no pure Jew, the means of testing the true Arabian cassia, and he flies at me thus like a madman."

"Be silent!" he whispered, in Hebrew, "or thou shalt never see another Feast of


Tabernacles—I swear it by the glory in the Temple.”

“He threatens me again, my lord, now—not a moment since; he tells me, in Hebrew, that I shall never see another Feast of Tabernacles, if I dare to speak.”

“What is this, Agrippa?” said Tiberius, stamping his foot; “is Cæsar to be fooled before his very eyes,—was it for nought that Herod treated his children, as the divine Augustus said, worse than his swine?”

“May the king live for ever!” said Agrippa, with an Oriental motion of homage; “but the quack is sick in the brain. I only bade him come to my chamber, that he might prepare for me a febrifuge, such as the Syrian leeches use.”

“I suspect some stratagem,” replied Tiberius, “for I see an evil spirit in thine eye; but the Jew shall not be hurt, he shall read me the verses of his people sometimes after the bath—they will give a zest to the warmer fancies of our own Ovid.”





"Prepare thy tomb!" muttered Agrippa in Hebrew.

"There, again he threatens me, and bids me prepare for death," I cried.

"Agrippa," said the Emperor, turning round with an air that betrayed no particle of emotion, "two days since, at the fourth hour, you drove with Caius towards Naples. At the third milestone from Pausilippo you spoke to your companion in Greek."

"Two days since I drove to Naples," said Agrippa, sullenly, and fixing his eyes on Tiberius, whose face was stiff as that of a corpse. He continued, paying no heed to the reply :

"You said to Caius: 'The lion is near his end, his claws are blunt: write to Sejanus, and offer him a tribunate if he will convoke the senate, and send two lictors to——'"

"It is false!" murmured Agrippa; "the deaf charioteer is a spy, and hired by my enemies."

"Macro," said Tiberius, pointing to Agrippa,


"take him to the Mamertine. Agrippa, farewell, and thank thy God that the lion has not used his claws; Caius, learn discretion, and never employ deaf charioteers. A second such drive may bring you to the narrow house in Rome, that stands so dangerously near the edge of the Tarpeian. But no more jesting; now, Caius, what say the plebs of me?"

"The journals are dull," said Caius, "and the Squibs duller. Nothing but rhymes to the comedian Bathyllus and odes to Galloper; that won the last race for the Blue party in the Circus. Let me see—oh, Plautilla, who went to Baiæ a Penelope, has returned a Helen."

"Well put," said Tiberius.

"An epigram too on old Scaurus, who is always giving a feast to celebrate his reconciliation with his wife. Phædrus calls him the man who has been married a thousand times, and always to the same woman."

"Good," said Tiberius, assuming the critic—"good!"



“Report that a Sabine vintner, in disgust at his district’s wine, has invented a means of making water intoxicating. Proposed that 500 statues be erected to him in the Forum, and that he be called ‘Benefactor of the Roman world,’ if he is successful; but if not, that he be ducked in the Tiber, and then drowned in a wine vat, to propitiate the vintners, who, if it is true, intend to ravage Gaul.”

“Ye gods!” said Tiberius, suddenly rising and stamping with impatience, “is all the world leagued to drive the old man into Hades? Ye are all traitors and cheats, all—all; there is no hope but in Jove—only in Jove. Listeners at every door, and behind every hanging—every kiss of the hand but to see how long my pulse will beat in life”—(glancing at me in a way that showed me he had observed the gesture of Agrippa)—“no smile but to deceive—no look of greeting but to count my wrinkles or measure the hollows of my cheek. If I eat less than usual, then a hundred letters; if I.

eat more, then slanders of my debauches; but, mark you, I bid you beware!" (and the slaves, accustomed to these outbursts of fury, shrunk from the room)—"there is life in the old tyrant as you call him yet; let traitors beware—but go, Caius, and bid Hierocles bring the letters of the spies, that we may try and smoke some more of these foxes out of their holes. Had I but a hundred heads now at my feet, I should grow young again, like Æson in his magic bath.

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"Excellent!" said Tiberius.


"Here is something rather ribald—shall I read it?" said Caligula.

"Read on."

"It is a foul, foolish thing, not worth reading."

"Nothing disturbs the wise; not slanders, nor the fire-forged thunder-stone," said Tiberius, quoting a line of some Greek poet.

"It is a letter," continued the reader, with a malicious smile, and an air of affected re-



luctance, "affecting to be from the King of Parthia, and addressed, not to Claudius Tiberius Nero, but to Calvus Biberius Mero. It prays you to take compassion on the world, and to destroy yourself, in spite of the philosopher's axiom, that only gout and stone are sufficient arguments to induce the wise man to fall on his own sword."

"Cookshop wit," said Tiberius, writhing at the satire he loved to affect to despise. "The Prætor should look to such buffoons. These slanders get, like the scorpions, into every wall, and, like flies, they sting and buzz in every chamber."

"They say," continued Caligula, reading calmly on, and paying no attention to the suppressed anger of the Emperor, "that these baths of Baiaæ are only fit for the puny foplings who swim about in seas of floating rose leaves—fellows who could not lift one of my German spears—pah!—fellows whom I could kill with a pinch of my finger and thumb. Sons of Romulus, indeed!"

With the gladness of one doing a task he took pleasure in, Caligula strode out of the room.

“There goes,” said Tiberius, with a smile—for he remembered how Augustus had called Caius slow and cruel—“a water-snake for Rome, and a monster for the universal world. But, to work, for it is now the fourth hour. I must strike but once, but strike sure !”

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At the loud blast of the slave's trumpet, announcing the fourth hour, I was hurried from the Emperor's presence to exercise my new functions as sub-librarian and amanuensis of the Roman Cæsar.

Was it but a dream then that I was doomed to an eternal curse? Which of these laughing and groaning slaves had ever heard of the Messiah? Who would believe me if I told them that the Son of God had lately been crucified in Jerusalem like a common thief? Why, there was a slave of Tiberius impaled but yesterday for stealing a silver cup, and there was one

strangled only the day before for breaking a marble Cupid in the atrium! \*        \*

Sejanus was at this time the favourite of the Emperor, and the sole ruler of Rome, of which he was the only resident Consul. The priests and senate became his dependants; his frown was death. Originally the son of a poor knight, he had begun life as the parasite of the father of that miserable epicure, Apicius, who had just committed suicide because he had only some millions of sesterces left, scarcely sufficient to procure him one meal of flamingo's hearts, nightingales' brains, fatted snails, dormice, with the usual expensive sauce of ambergris and other perfumes. At once pliant and persevering, generous and rapacious, atheistic yet a respecter of religious decorum, his skill in governing without appearing to govern soon won him the favour of Tiberius, whose reserve and timidity alike made him weary of Rome. A long year of intrigue—the discoveries of plots, real and imaginary—a pressure of business,

ingeniously contrived to weigh unduly heavy on the Emperor—soon drove Tiberius to the luxurious caves of Capri, where, according to the gossip of Rome, scenes that would shock a Spanish dancing-girl, and tortures that would disgust a hangman's help, were daily and nightly enacted. The bald Caprineus, as the rabble called the Cæsar, was said to offer rewards for new vices, and for new modes of crushing out life from gashed and writhing bodies. At once a pedant and a debauchee, Tiberius openly avowed in my presence that he cared not if he were hated, so he were feared. The city seldom heard from him, but when he issued a decree approving of the seizure of some rich senator's vineyards by the hated Sejanus, or when he wrote one of his subtle and studied letters to the senate, ordering the arrest (and therefore death) of some member of that order who had dared to speak the truth. The people hated him, because he did not love the city, and lived, like a barbarian exile, away from the circus and the games that



Augustus used to daily preside at. The patricians hated him, because they feared him ; and, indeed, such proud families as the *Æmili*, *Manli*, *Camilli*—men in whose halls stood the effigies of the great champions against the *Volsci* and the *Sabine*—were scarcely yet prepared to bow down in full homage to the descendant of one scarcely equal to themselves. *Tiberius* had no sympathies with Rome ; he cared neither for the law courts nor the forum, the sacrifices nor the games. Though he was fond of blood as a *Scythian*, he was effeminate as a *Greek* : he did not care for the sociable *cæna*, the bath, or the sports of the field of *Mars*. Even the men of pleasure despised a man who could shut himself up in a rocky island, in company with a mere band of slaves, grammarians, and executioners. The vices that would have been to their minds rather befitting the purple in the *Palatine*, became hideous in a distant island. The oppressions they might have borne from the *Cæsar*, became intolerable when inflicted by a servant of the *Cæsar*

like one of themselves. Augustus had been content to reign, and yet preserve an appearance of liberty ; but this Tiberius shook the sword in the eyes of those who knelt before him, and clanked their chains rudely in their faces. A series of crimes had raised Sejanus to a height of power that had alarmed a suspicious tyrant, who loved no one that did not ease him of his care or minister to his pleasure. The death of Germanicus, of Livia—the wise mother of the Emperor—the murder of Drusus, the imprisonment of his son, and the banishment of the “she-wolf,” his mother, had all been so many steps of Sejanus to empire.

But a month since he had been made joint consul with the Emperor ; and had even ventured to propose an alliance with the imperial house, by marriage with the widow of Drusus. But this request Tiberius had, for the first time, met with procrastinations and delays—more than even his usual distrust and hesitation would seem to have augured.

Still, the favourite stood firm in what I must call the affections of Tiberius, in spite of slander, absence, and conspiracy. True, every hour brought the Emperor letters from his vicegerent at Rome, and relays of couriers on smoking horses were every moment spurring up to the palace door. True, that nearly every soothsayer and augur, every slave and freed-man, was in the pay of this candidate for empire. From the slaves who swept the Mosaic floors, to the fowler who brought in his strings of thrushes and quails into the kitchen, there were few but had been tampered with by this dangerous subject. The very augur who interpreted the nightly dreams of the Emperor, and the visions that made him dread to sleep, was perhaps infusing suspicions of some enemy of Sejanus. The rhetoricians who daily read to the Emperor their tedious declamations, instilled into him that horror of Rome, or that fear of popular power, which served the purpose of the minister. Sejanus spoke through a thousand tongues, he

wrought by a thousand hands, he listened with a thousand ears. Tiberius had his slow rack and axe, but this man's wrath fell sudden and irresistible as the lightning: it was omnipresent, and swooped no one could foresee where, when, or on whom. All the intrigues of Caligula and his party were to induce the Emperor to return to Rome, and to watch the movements of one who they declared was aiming at some secret and dangerous plot. The Emperor was all indecision. Now he called for a galley to be manned; now a letter from Rome, informing him that there had been treasonable cries heard in the ox-market and the Velabrum, drove him back to Capri; now triremes were fitted up to bear him to the legions of Gaul or Syria; now he revelled at a debauch, and drank smilingly to his absent friend.

It was recorded to the favour of Tiberius, that he listened to my praises of his poems with a satisfied smile, and, though not correcting what I pointed out, he attended to my criticisms. I soon became his favourite physician,

and sometimes my writings, sometimes my opiates, procured him sleep.

One morning I found him hot and fevered ; his pulse was violent ; his countenance worn and troubled. He looked more aged than when I left him the night before : he was bent and feeble, his knees shook, his hands trembled. He refused to eat, and he bade me darken the curtain of the doorway.


Everyone I met assumed a saddened face, but I saw that all eyes stole imperceptibly to where Caius stood, silent and obsequious, by the head of the couch. Conspicuous among the sympathisers was Livilla, the widow whose hand Sejanus had claimed, not, as it was supposed, without the consent of this woman, who, known to be licentious beyond even the Roman ladies of the day, was accused by public rumour of the death of her husband, and of an intrigue with the favourite who sought her alliance.

“ Oh, the gods, my life and soul ! ” she sobbed, in a false and wanton voice, “ I vow to

raise an image to Jupiter the preserver, if but Atropos holds her cruel hand."

"If she'd spare her vows," said a rough Roman, who was in the body-guard, "and hold her tongue, the great Cæsar might keep cooler, and cheat the three sisters yet. Why, now, this is what I say, friend Gehazi,—how can a man face a shoal of German darts, and yet be crammed into his urn by a mere blast of a fever not hotter than the sirocco. I tell you what"—and here he whispered—"I believe it's all a trap—take care you don't put your foot in it. The old weasel's too much for us, he has got his eye on us, I'll bet a shekel."

Before I could express my astonishment at my old friend's caution he was gone, and I heard his lusty voice soon afterwards challenging the sentinels on their rounds. The Emperor had already partly verified his suspicions, by petulantly pushing Livilla from him, and calling for supper to be served in the open court.



“My pulse goes somewhat slower,” he said, turning to me; “but there is a black weight still at my heart, that nothing but blood-letting will remove.”

Ill or not the Emperor ate largely of eggs, salad, and Calabrian hams, ending with a dish of goose liver and truffle sauce, Neapolitan chestnuts and pomegranates from Sorrentum and the gardens of the temple of Minerva.

A single pigeon circling round the courtyard, he suddenly called for a Thracian falconer, who practised the hawking of his country for Cæsar’s amusement. The Greek came smiling, and running, and threw up his hawk.

“By Hercules, what a bird!” said Tiberius. “Look, Caius—now he mounts, mounts!—now he swoops! Dead! for a mina!—dead, and at my very feet! Grant it an omen, thou Nemesis of Latium! What here?—a scrap of papyrus under the left wing, and writing—ah! yes! and from-” and he slipped it in his robe.

"Jew," he said to me, drawing me aside, "I love thy nation and honour thy God, to whom I have vowed a temple; I hold thee indeed as one of the nearest and dearest to my heart. The King of Rome will be here soon, and I must be abed. Tell the slaves I am sick to death, and hush the singing of the spinning-wheels; quiet, too, at once the noisy dice-players in the vestibule, and that cursed Syren who wearies me with his double pipe. Follow me; for if this arrow misses, I must take to my catapult, and my war engines."

As I left the Emperor, to publish to the slaves and courtiers (synonymous terms), the sickness of their chief, I heard the rattle of the wheels of a Biga, and the next moment a stranger entered, of proud and imperious bearing, lackeyed by a dozen running couriers, who tripped at his heels, watching for a gesture of his eye or hand. He was in the prime of life, and a crisp black beard curled round his low chin. His face was handsome, but for two dark stealthy eyes, that seemed never to



regard you in full front, but to watch for you under the ambuscade of the lowering eye-brow. He wore a Spanish cuirass, richly chased and ornamented at the shoulders with bosses of lions' heads ; from his waist hung scales and flaps, terminating in Medusas. His legs were bare, but on his feet were richly ornamented buskins, of a costly fashion. From his shoulder hung a military sagum, of scarlet Gallic cloth ; his sword was the short and heavy one of the Roman legionary.


In my hurry I ran against him, and he called out—"What! a Jew in the palace? Give him a dozen stripes for daring to thrust himself in the way of a Roman patrician. No, fellow, not now—unbind him, for my lord and master is, I hear, ill, and knows not of my coming. Softly, for perchance Cæsar sleeps, or is busy with the lawyers about weighty matters of the state."

"My Lord Tiberius," I said, "does not sleep, but is very sick, and will not that any intrude. May I crave your name, sir?"

"I am Sejanus," said the favourite, proudly drawing himself to his height, and dropping his cloak into the hands of a Sygambrian slave ; as he spoke, he tossed up the curtain that covered the door, and entered the presence with me.

"Sejanus?" said the sick Emperor, in a weak voice, but still with affected surprise and indignation, "what brings you from Rome, against my special wish, without announcement, and without the usual ceremony that befits a palace?"

"A motive, Tiberius," said the wily favourite, flinging himself with affected devotion at the foot of the couch, and seizing the old man's languid hand that hung from the coverlet—"that has redeemed so many of my previous errors—one that makes the father forgive the prodigal, and the wife the spendthrift—love; a fear that something went ill at Capreae, and that Jove, jealous of such a friendship as ours, was forging some weapon to cut the soft silken cords that unite our twin minds."



“No thought, then, of the old man’s death,” said Tiberius, watching with careful dissimulation the countenance of his minister—“no dreams of power, no visions of guilty succession to the throne of the divine Augustus?”

Again Sejanus expressed his disinterested and passionate love for one whom he desired not to survive. Might Jove, he said, ordain them a common funeral pile, he should die happy if he knew that—one small urn should hold the mingled ashes of Tiberius and Sejanus.

“I restore thee to my heart,” said Tiberius, coughing with the air of a dying man; “but lend me thy hand, Ælius, that I may rise awhile—rest a moment; tell me whose handwriting this papyrus bears?”

“It is a forgery!” exclaimed the discomfited favourite, turning pale.

“And this, too,” said Tiberius, drawing another from his girdle, “which I intercepted yesterday at the same hour.”

“Bribe an augur to warn him of Rome!”  
—(Sejanus read the paper.)

"Now, look," said the Emperor, leaping up in full strength, and snatching an axe from the foot of his bed. Sejanus instinctively put his hand to his sword.

"Do not fear, Ælius, but see the old man has some life still," and with a single blow of his axe he clove in two a massy citron table which stood near. With his left hand he then snatched up a silver cup that lay on a table near him, and squeezed it together with a grip, the force of which had become proverbial.

"My Lord Cæsar, I thank the gods to see your Herculean strength is not a whit abated. As for these letters, they are but the work of spies that use my name. Were I but one moment alone with you, I could convince you of the plots of my enemies, and of my own unabated truth."

With a wave of his hand Tiberius cleared the room, and the halls were soon filled with a huge crowd of whisperers engaged in foretelling the favourite's downfall. It was ru-


moured that the Emperor had always had suspicions of his loyalty; that once at a sacrifice he had handed him a leaden instead of a steel knife, and that the way in which he leant on his minister's arm when they met was only to prevent the possibility of Sejanus's drawing a concealed weapon. All sorts of foolish prophecies and auguries were hinted. One serious-looking fanatic vowed that the lower part of the last victim's liver was folded inwards.

Others declared that the Emperor was about to immediately start for Rome, having taken the consulate from Sejanus. Some of the more experienced courtiers, with sour faces, entreating for silence, professed to be able to ascertain exactly what was happening from the sound of the distant murmurs of the two voices in the small apartment branching from the hall where the Emperor and Sejanus now sat.

"Now," they said, "he demands his betrothed wife, Livilla, and the Emperor refuses him, for fear of increasing the popular jealousies against him. Now Tiberius declares

his intention of going to Rome, and Sejanus warns him of plots and many dangers. Now the buzz is higher and more angry—the Emperor tells him he is too proud and insolent, and requires a curb; that not content with greatness, he must needs ally himself to the blood of the Cæsars. Now Sejanus offers to surrender all his titles, and to return as plain freedman to serve at the Emperor's table. The Emperor, indignant at his pride, now orders him into exile—into the fever-haunted Sardinia, where he *can't* live a twelvemonth."

Every now and then, at the summons of the imperial voice, an order was sent for a trireme to be instantly equipped, for an escort of guards, for a litter to be prepared for Rome. By the next messenger each order was countermanded. The Emperor seemed distracted by the multifarious procrastinations; once we heard a sword flung violently on the floor, and the next moment a bronze seat thrown down, but none dared to disturb the conference. Then came passion-



ate expostulations, angry questions, and lastly long dialogues of familiar conversation.

The last message of Tiberius had brought up two quaternions of soldiers. The enemies of the favourite believed his doom was sealed; but suddenly the curtain drew up, and the Emperor appeared, smiling and talking, leaning on the arm of his favourite.

“Farewell,” he said, “thou one-half of my life, may the gods of Rome guard thee and reward thee as thou hast deserved.”

With a low and Oriental obeisance Sejanus bent and kissed the Emperor’s hand; then strode out slowly, exchanging smiles with his friends, and frowns with any malign eye that met his.

“Friend,” said Tiberius to me that night, as we read the love verses of Gallus together; “you must hence to Rome for me, and Macro with thee. When men offer a bull to Neptune, they need one to wield the axe and one to hold the rope.”

He is always talking of victims, this Cæsar,

I thought ; but I shrugged my shoulders and bent my head in silence as I girded my robe.

"Thy nation is curious in poisons," said Macro to me, as we rode together that night ; "so the Emperor tells me ; he says thou hast a drug that will kill a kid in five minutes, which may aid the work."

"What work?" I said, with an air of surprise.

"What work?" he said, turning a quick eye upon me, with an expression first of annoyance, then of wonder, which melted into a grim smile. "I have hitherto thought the Jews a wise people," he said, as he turned his head and looked towards Rome.

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It was morning when we entered the gate of the city of Romulus. The seven hills were diademed with marble palaces, which were as crowns ; the gardens lay like strings of jewels round an empress's neck

Already the defiles of the Suburra and Velabrum, the poorer parts of Rome, the ox



market and the *via lata*, were crowded with slaves, carrying strigils (scrapers) and perfumes to the baths, brawny gladiators hurrying with their oil flasks and wooden swords to the fencing schools, and boys going to school with slaves behind them to carry their satchels. Here came a crowd of Syrians with chalked feet being led to the slave market, here a band of Cappadocian porters swinging along with a knight's gilded litter. Huge waggons of Alban stone and Libyan grain thronged the streets, that were so narrow that the inhabitants might have shaken hands together from the top windows of the eighth story. The suburb taverns beside the Tiber were full of noisy sailors, thieves, runaway slaves, and coffin makers, all talking of Sejanus, his return in triumph from Capri, and his anticipated appointment to the tribunate, in anticipation of the succession. I heard a drunken priest of Cybele singing his praises to a crowd of the rabble, who were discussing their bread and strong wine on a

tavern bench. "Mæcenās!" said one, "why, he wasn't fit to pour out his wine. He gives us games, doesn't he, he gives us bread—and he hates the cursed Jews, doesn't he? Very well then."

As we rode deeper into the city, its vastness awed and astonished me. These countless temples contained the treasure of the world. This was built with the spoil of Parthia, that with the gold of Spain. "Here Scipio trod," said my delighted guide—delighted with my honest admiration—"and here Curtius leaped. Up that hill Cæsar climbed, crowned with laurel, and yonder in that hall he fell. The Forum, with its temples and basilicas—the Campus Martius, with its theatres and circus—the Pincian Hill, with its gardens of Sallust and Lucullus—the yellow Tiber itself that lay before me—the Palatine, the Esquiline, the Viminal, the Cœlian, the Aventine, were all soon familiar to me as the hills around Jerusalem.

The riches of the open booths and shops

astonished me even more. There were the costly Murrhine cups, and those of onyx and amber ; ostrich eggs mounted in gold, and studded with gems ; couches of ivory, inlaid with tortoise-shell, were in the stalls of the Corinthian silversmiths ; in the sculptor's shed Greek artificers toiled to rival or imitate the works of Scopas and Myron, Phidias, and Praxiteles. Next door, perhaps, might be a fruiterer's, with huge golden globes of melons hanging at the door, or speckled monsters of gourds, rolling under the window. There were Venafrican olives, Chian figs, and the leeks of Tarentum.


Presently we passed a Moorish cook, his glassy dark features set off by a snowy turban, who was carrying home, in small leaden tanks, slung by a pole to his neck, the black fish of Egypt, or the Sicilian lampreys ; round his girdle were slung bundles of fog peckers, or ortolans ; and a boy carrying an immense Sabine cheese, ran before him. In this shop hung bladder lanterns, wax lights,

and torches, and in another were Memphian reeds, pen-cases, and piles of plaited papyrus, ready for the author's use. Now came by a patrician in robes of the light Greek fashion, followed by a slave carrying an umbrella to shield his precious complexion from the sun. Now we passed a vintner's, who boasted on his sign of having some ninety sorts of wine, from Sebine and Falernian, Cæcuban and Sorrentine, down to vulgar Sabine, and honest Egyptian vinegar. Now through the crowd of swaggering soldiers, Spanish dancing girls, Egyptian priests, begging Jews, Syrian snake charmers, the poor clients going for their morning dole, the Libyan courier-boys, and Cappadocian porters, loads of building materials, and swaying timbers, groaned a waggon laden with Iberian wool, or bales of Indian frankincense and Babylonian hangings. In the market-place and round the fountains lolled itinerant hucksters, selling hot sausages and stewed vetches, while Spanish showmen

and Arab jugglers divided with them the attention of the crowd.

One sign invited attention to Picentine loaves; another to the now less renowned Cantabrian hams, Lucanian sausages, and Luna cheese. At this stall were the well-known painted baskets for which Britain was famous; and here were slung up Spanish shields and Thracian bucklers, spears, Assyrian poniards, and the bipennis of Gaul. Here I saw a showman exhibiting an ape, at which he allowed any spectator to fling a lance, amusing the mob by the nimble evasions of the animal. Next him, perhaps, shouted a rope-dancer or a reciter of tragic verses.

“And what think you of the great Cæsar,” said Macro, looking away, as if inadvertently, as he spoke. I, knowing the wiliness of the man, to whom the most secret services of the Emperor were ever intrusted, and who even now looked to the world but a mere bluff soldier, riding on a careless search for pleasure, though I knew him bound on some special



dangerous errand of state, did not reply at once, but, after a few minutes, answered with some monosyllables meaning nothing.

“A shrewd man,” said Macro, eyeing me significantly, “learns as much from silence as from speech. No answer could convey so much to me as your silence; I begin to think you really honest. Why, Tiberius, or old Scævola, or that smiling fool Piso, would have met me, ere I had finished my sentence, with a dozen scraps of rhetoric, full of admiration for the divinity of Capri. His wisdom they would have compared to Jove’s, his poetry to Apollo’s, and his skill in governing to Agamemnon’s; but between men of the world why this artifice?—we know whom we serve, and what we came to do—and” (ringing his sword, as he spoke, with a clash into his scabbard) “let us do it hand in hand, and without any Grecian shuffling. Mars knows I am ready enough to brave the lightning alone; but if Cæsar will send us out as spies on each other, why, so be it; for you

see I am blunt, though I am a courtier, worse luck ; but still, between ourselves, let me tell you, I think our task about as dangerous as that of the German brave, who, to show his courage, rides into the sea, and slashes with his sword at the leaping breakers."

"What task ? " I said—for I knew of no mission of mine to Rome, save that I was to be enrolled into the household of the favourite, my introduction to whom had been so ill-omened. Homeless and houseless as I was, and with the weight of the curse at my heart, I cared not where I went, and my life was passing before my eyes like a dream.

"What task !" he said, with a violence that astonished me. "Does the priest not know the ox he has to strike when a creature is led in with gilded horns and a garland round its neck ? What task ! do you think, Jew, that this shallow pretence is to deceive an old soldier in this warfare of wits ? Does the engineer know what is meant against the

city when the earthwalls are thrown up; the slingers begin to melt the lead, and the tortoiseman to wheel the ram and join the shield. I wish I had had some bolder man though, as Junius, who rides in at once on the spears, and flings his helmet in the German's face. Though I am an old courtier, I like bold open counsel in these dangerous affairs. Keep the smile on the face, and the knife in the sleeve for every-day work."

"Why do you smile?" I said, for I saw him then looking at my saddle-bow, where the leather-bag hung that contained the more precious of my medicines.

"Laugh—only to think that this sober-visaged man, sly as a flamen or a Syrian eunuch, carries at his saddle stuff that would turn a king blue in an hour, and kill a kid in three minutes. Behold, I feel ready to cry out, comes one who brings to Rome opiates that will give the old man the sleep the young man prays for—that will give rest to love, anger, envy,



and even ambition. You turn quack, and I'll be your mime."

"I am a physician, and not a poisoner," I exclaimed, angrily, spurring my tired horse; "and I come as Jehovah's minister alone, to comfort and to soothe—to bring rest to the great, and forgetfulness of sorrow to the afflicted."

"Rest to the great!" cried Macro; "yes, very true," and he laughed grimly, and brushed the red feather of his helmet.

"Oh, the sly Jew," I heard him mutter, as he asked the way to an inn in a retired part of the Transtiberine quarter, near the Temple of Fortune.

"What do you?" I said, as he suddenly leapt off his horse, thrust the bridle into my hand, and ran into the open temple.

"Just one prayer for success," he said, as he returned; "I thought, too, the silver eyes of the goddess shone on me propitiously. Was that thunder on our right hand not a good omen?"

"Success in what?" I exclaimed, anxiously.

He did not answer me, but rode furiously on, and never turned his head.


"Too late to-night—to-morrow for the work—I sup with Sejanus at the fifth hour—and which is the poison for the bird?" he exclaimed, with affected innocence and a meaning smile, as he handled my various packages.

I made no answer; but, surprised at his importunity, pushed him a harmless powder, the basis of a cosmetic well known to the beauties of Judea.

"Is this for the cup or the dish?" he said, eyeing me closely.

"For neither," I replied, rising from my seat. "Understand me, Macro, I am a Jew, and understand not these black deeds; I would do harm to none, the very fly I drive from my wine cup ere he drink. I will meddle in none of these dark crimes. I will not be a courtier's tool."

"And you received no commission from



Tiberius?" said Macro, fastening his cloak with angry haste.

"None," said I; "he merely touched my medicine case and said, 'Rid me, then, of this gnawing pain, and hold me thy debtor for ever.'"

"And call you that nothing; do you expect Cæsar to speak plainer?"

"Nothing," I said.

"Then thou art either as wily as Ulysses himself, or the poorest gull that ever mixed up chalk and water," said Macro.

Exchanging no more words, I soon after fell asleep. It was the fourth hour of the ensuing day ere I awoke, and with that drowsy numbness about me that proved to me that I had partaken of some narcotic.


I asked the busy landlord for Macro—he had gone out with a slave, who had brought him a gay banqueting dress full two hours since—soldiers of rank and senators had been, he said, all the morning in his room. I looked round the place for my medicine-chest, for some remedy for a sickness that

beset me. I examined my packets, and found a poison, which I kept apart, in a secret pocket of a case, gone!

No time was to be lost ; so drinking off a cup of vile myrrhed wine, I asked for the palace of Sejanus ; a flat-nosed, thick-lipped boxer, who was reading a notice of games in the Circus, stared at my eagerness.

"Sejanus's?" he said ; "why, there away, that marble mountain there by the gardens of Mæcenas, to the right of the Pincian, on the Esquiline."

I girded up my robe and ran ; the crowd I jostled thought me a runner exercising—an angry centurion struck at me with his vine stick—some brawny fair-haired German slaves tried to trip me up—I ran against a fat priest of Isis, and soiled his white linen robes—I shook the litter of some old republican patrician, and his slaves chased me through narrow lanes, across market-places, up hill, past hovel, shop, palace, temple, fountain, right through the Campus and its



Egyptian obelisk and golden sun, up to the Esquiline.

At the door a slave I jostled seized me by the arm.

"What! not know me," he said, "not the snake-charmer, who baffled Lazarus at the Red Sea—not the courier of Sejanus, who can drive six wild horses, run down a wild deer, and throw a knife to a hair's breadth?"

I seized the opportunity. "Here are fifty pieces of silver," I said.


"So I see; and very good silver too. What shall I do for this?—you can get a father removed, or a troublesome wife quieted."

"No fooling, slave," I said; "lend me a waiting-dress, and let me visit the banquet. Let me stand at the door with a fowl, or carry the amphoras from the cellar—anything, so I see the guests and this great lord of Rome."

"Lord indeed!" said the quondam juggler, with a grin. "Here he is consul and priest,

sending whom he likes to the dogs, feeding both the asses of Rome, and the lions that amuse them. And now comes Macro with a message that Tiberius must needs make him Tribune. Talk of Mars and Venus—here is the god to worship! But what brings you here? Is Jerusalem grown too healthy or too wise for your trade? or have you killed them half, and left the rest dying?—eh, man? And what trick is this? But still, for fifty pieces of silver a man can do anything—even get a courier to hold his tongue.”

I shall never forget the sight when, properly disguised, and bearing a huge chased silver dish for mixing wine, I entered the banquet-room of the favourite. On couches round a centre table, which was covered with an Eastern embroidered cloth worked with gold thread, sat twelve guests, dressed to represent the chief deities of Olympus. Sejanus—for I recognized him at once—sat as Jove, with a gold thunderbolt in his hand, and a tame eagle chained at his feet, his hair arranged in



the Phidian fashion. By his right side sat a broad-chested noble aping Neptune, with his trident and a robe clasped with a small gold dolphin; and on the left reclined Macro, fully armed as Mars, and shining in the light of the bronze candelabra, which were formed of rings of dancing Cupids. The hangings of the walls were Indian silks, wrought with golden stars and badges of flowers; and from the roof came every now and then, through subtle apertures, delicious mists of perfumes, while the smoke of incense crept in at the ivory doors.

Occasionally the richest dishes were handed round, and cut up by the slave-carver with extraordinary skill and extreme speed—Numidian attagens, Sicilian lampreys, and wild boar from the Pontine Marshes—all faded away before his keen and swift blade. The guests laughed and joked at the mimic's gestures, the fool's rants, and the graceful gambols of the Spanish dancing-girls, who floated in the air, or twined and bounded in mazy fantasies, which the eye could scarcely follow.

But the jester was the real centre of mirth. He ran from couch to couch, balancing goblets on his finger, or tripping up the boys who bore golden bowls, chased with reliefs, from the hands of the rarest sculptors of that Corinth that Mummius destroyed.

"What are you looking for," said Sejanus, "in the wine-jug? Has a scorpion fallen in?—or have you found the wit that I lost there in yesterday's cæna at the villa of Lucullus?"

"Neither, my lord," said the buffoon; "but I look for truth; for the proverb says there is truth in wine. This is the second amphora I have emptied looking for it, and all I find is, that the more I drink the more lies I tell, and the worse I see."

"Never go to Ravenna, then," said Sejanus.

"And why not?" said a guest. "I demand, Jupiter, your excellent reason."

"Because at Ravenna they sell the water and give the wine. Now, a riddle for the twelve gods—one that will make lame Vulcan



throw away his crutches, and Pluto laugh till he drops his sceptre. Why has the land of the Chauci no carpenters?"

"We give it up," shouted the ten gods, impatient of thought.

"Why, because the land of the Chauci has no wood."

"What news from the island of Do-littles?" said one of the guests.

"Why, none—but the people of Patmos, who are all blind, have, I hear, chosen a one-eyed king."

At this sally the twelve gods laughed, and then, as if laughing made them thirsty, called for wine. At once a dozen red arches of wine frothed into their cups, and again the perfumes fell and the incense rose.

"If Cæsar became divine because he slew some thousand Britons, and such cattle, why should not Milo the gladiator be made Consul?" said the jester. "Now, come, knight, answer me that, or I shall deem you not worthy of your three names. And tell me

this :—If every Cæsar's to give a name to a month, like Julius and Augustus, what is to be done with the thirteenth Emperor ? ”

“ May the gods confound me, Sejanus,” cried one of the Olympian deities, whose voice was rather thick with wine, “ but this jester of yours gets more libellous every day ! ”

“ Why is not Varo here ? ” said another, on his right hand, arranging his garland of violets as he spoke.

“ Varo,” said Sejanus, with a calm voice, “ bled himself to death yesterday, in his bath, by the orders of our good Lord Tiberius, which I had the honour of forwarding to him. A brave Roman and a good citizen—he first made his will, then offered up a prayer, and retired with the lictors to die.”

“ What, Varo ! ” said one—“ why, we met yesterday at the Treasury, and he offered me a million sesterces for my pretty dancing-girl ; and I met him afterwards at the Mint, and promised to send him a dish of carp from my own tank.”

“What was his crime?” said the jester—  
“was he too rich, or had he too many clients  
walking at his heels?”

“Take away this fool and give him the  
whip,” said Sejanus, angrily; “he grows insolent.” The next moment the screams of the  
miserable slave were heard above the laughter  
of the guests, but no one pleaded in his behalf.  
With all his virtues, the Roman was  
ever cruel.

“A toast!” cried Macro; “let us throw the  
die for the first to give it round. Who  
throws Venus? I always throw the dog—  
curse on it. Venus, by gad!—the great  
Sejanus, favoured of the gods and man, has  
it. Were I so lucky, I should throw away  
something, like Polycrates, to propitiate the  
envious Nemesis.”

“I was born for perpetual summer,  
Macro,” said the favourite—“now, seven cups  
to the lady that I love.”

As they filled their cups, I observed Macro  
shake a powder from his sleeve into his cup.

As the hands were raising the cups for the toast, he called, I observed, for a drier wine; but kept beside him the deadly mixture he had prepared for a fitting occasion. I placed myself behind a pillar, close to his side, ready to save the great Roman from the death of which I seemed about to be the unconscious cause.


"What is your opinion of the last love verses of Symmachus?" said Sejanus to a critic who was waiting, in some anxiety, for the opportunity of destroying some reputation.

"Mere frizzled ringlets!" he said, superciliously, and waiting for the laugh that followed his blow.

"Have you read the last elegy of Dinorius?"

"He steeps his verse in myrrh and unguents," said the same remorseless judge.

"By-the-bye," said a fop, who had been also burning to show his wit, "did you hear the reply of Phœbe to her husband when she entered the theatre with a crowd of us young fellows at her heels, and at the same time her



mother-in-law came into the next seat with a train of only some half-dozen poor grammarians. No? Why, she said, 'These young men will grow old with me!' Cursed clever hit at the old bird—"

"She has a smile," said Sejanus, "that would soften a usurer. I heard her the other day at the Circus, when her father, the old republican, complained that she came covered with all the pearls of a Syrian king, that she dressed so to please her husband. The next day she came in plain violet; and, when he seemed pleased, she said that she dressed so to please her father. By Juno, I would give my bronze Cupid but to kiss her hand."

"Forty-five thousand knights died at Cannæ, yet I would rather have been one of those than have fallen on my sword, in a fright," said a morose-looking man, abruptly.

"What do you mean, Balbus?"

"Mean! why, our old friend Scaurus last night offered himself as a sacrifice, because

the lictors knocked at his gate to invite him to this very cæna."

"And you knew nothing of this, Sejanus?"


"Not a word, upon my conscience!" replied the favourite, striking his heart, a suspicious rattle at the same time indicating that he wore a breastplate under his festive gown.

"Your conscience sounds somewhat hollow," said the satirist; "but I believe you, for I know Scaurus stood a little in your way. Now, did he not? Be frank."

"As much," said the favourite, proudly, "as the worm does in the ploughman's. The fool who died of a knock at the door was no very formidable foe."

"I am glad, verily," said the critic, "that the fellow made at least one good use of his sword, for he was of a rank Pompeian family, though he was allied to the Aurelii. His wife's brother married one of the Camilli."

"I never trouble myself about a scorpion's grandfather," said the wit, smiling on his host, whom he wished to propitiate.



"Verus is right," said Sejanus; "let's talk of love and wine—no matter if there is one urn more in the tomb of the Scauri. Rome has still sons enough. Nor can I think Rome has any right to mourn while I see around me such sages, warriors, and philosophers.

"Hear him!" said Macro, under breath to a companion. Sages—what! Messala, who hires witches to draw the moon down into his garden—warriors! old Donatus, who thinks he deserves a triumphal arch because he put down a bread riot at Lugdunum—philosopher! young Gallus, who studies the laws of motion in dancing-girls and race-horses."

This was said while the air was ringing with the flatterer's cries of "pulchre!" and "bene!" (bravo).

"Macro," cried the host, his face radiant with pleasure, "your cup stands full—now, five cups of Cæcuban to the health of Phœbe, the pretty widow of the Aventine."

"Widow!" said Macro.

"Yes! her husband died last night at the

fourth hour," said Sejanus, quietly, "of disease of the heart; an hour before he had been busy in the Temple of Concord and at the Register Office."


"Sudden deaths increase," said Macro, meaningly, and stirring up the powder in the wine with a rose-stalk from the garland he wore.

I think he was just about to kiss the cup, and recommend it to his frowning host as a peace-offering, when a stout man, very hot and anxious, ran in, and without ceremony handed a letter to Sejanus.

"Junius Marcus; are you acquainted with the new work of Domitius Marsus on urbanity?" said Sejanus, smiling, and offering the new comer a seat on his couch.

"I don't know what you mean," said Marcus. "I come from the baths of Agrippa, and meet Prætorian guards; I go to the arcades, and meet soldiers; I walk to the portico of the Graces, and meet soldiers."

"There are rumours of riots about the new prices at the theatre," said Sejanus; "and I





am unexpectedly called to a meeting of the senate in the temple of the Capitol ; I must stop these riots, and these——”

“I pass the cup of peace,” said Macro, rising and presenting it to his host, whom he regarded fixedly, and I thought with an almost imperceptible smile of triumph.

Sejanus took it, and was about to raise it to his lips with some commonplace on the blessings of friendship, when I rushed forward and threw the cup to the ground.

“It is poison!” I cried ; “see the dog that sniffed those drops that fell upon the door-post is already pining and faint ; in three minutes he will be dead!”


“Who is this slave?” cried Macro, drawing his sword, and calling for his sandals ; what runaway from the galleys has come here to insult the nobles of Rome—who art thou, rascal?” he said, seizing me by the throat.

“I am Gehazi, the physician of Jerusalem,”—fresh from Capri—I would have said, but the next instant I felt Macro thrust a handful

of his sleeve into my mouth. "Another word," he said, "and I stab thee where now thou standest."

"Let the fellow alone," said Sejanus, with a generosity I thought peculiar to him. "There may be something in what he says. Look, the dog is dead! Lydia, thou wert the best Molossian that ever pulled down a boar in the rushes. There has been some cursed tampering with the wine, but the slaves shall answer for it. Bibo, order three crosses for to-morrow morning; and first goes up that sly Syrian I bought at Rhodes, for I know he dabbles in cosmetics, and such men learn dangerous secrets—he may tell them charms, to make them give him a passage free. Macro, a word. The character of the man who governed Laodicea so well is above reproach. We all know how many statues the wool-sellers of that city have erected to the honour of Priscus Macro."

I saw Macro's eyes flash fire at this irony, for there had lately been a riot at Laodicea



to pull down a statue set up by a hireling to his honour.


"No, not yet," said the insolent noble, seeing that Macro was about to hurry off his festive robe and leave the room, the veins on his forehead swelling with rage, and his hand opening and closing as if in search of a weapon.

"Not yet, good Macro, for I purpose to let Bathyllus, my favourite mimic, furnish us some new and more exquisite amusement before we break up for the senate; before the wine grows stale, the lights turn dim, and the perfume grows vapid. Bathyllus," he said, to the mimic, who was gesticulating in a corner with one of the musicians, "give us your last imitation of that great rhetorician of the Basilicas."

As every face grew settled into a demeanour of attention, and every voice hushed its slander, praise, sneer, and jest, Bathyllus stepped forward, and, wrapping himself in a toga of the severest anti-imperial cut, com-

menced a declamation in the manner and with the voice of Macro. The clever low comedian of the Roman stage, with his droll eye and twisted mouth, imitated with ridiculous gravity the severity of the courtier's manner—so many words and the right hand up, so many and the left hand went up, so many and the right foot went forward, so many and the left foot went forward—so many inches from the robe the right hand was to be fixed, and so many inches the left. As every eye turned on Macro, and every mouth relaxed with a smile, I thought I never saw a proud man suffer so much as Macro; I saw that his long habit of reserve enabled him to conceal his rage, and in some degree to assume a painful ease; but ever and anon a burning glance from under his brow at Sejanus betrayed the bitter record that his revenge was laying up for these insults.

At a universal burst of laughter at the crowning gestures of the mimic the assembly



broke up ; some sprang up and called for their sandals, others tore off their garlands and flung them in a brazier that stood in a corner of the room, apparently ashamed of the temporary madness that had stolen away their senses—others, planting them firmer on their heads, sallied forth arm-in-arm, as if proud of avowing themselves the subjects of Bacchus. Some, not forgetful of religion, or at least willing to colour their debauch with a religious form, sprinkled their incense in the braziers, flung it up into the lamp flame, or emptied the last drop of their wine-cups, as a niggard libation to the gods who had loaded them with their gifts.


I, mixing with the slaves, observed Macro thrust his sandals angrily on his feet, and strike the page who brought them ; then, pushing through the crowd, I heard him whisper in the ear of Sejanus—"A drop of blood for every jest."

"Pooh, pooh ! my friend," said the favourite, turning sharply and regarding him

fixedly in the face, with that cool smile of contempt that is so maddening to pride, "that wine the dog could not drink has got somewhat into your head ; the fumes will go off in the cool air ; and I owed you, too, a turn for your trouble in mixing that vintage. Adieu—we meet again anon in the senate."

"Friends," he said, "let us go for half-an-hour to see a grapple in the amphitheatre of Metellus ; by that time the senate will have met ; the gods only know, friends, what bounties I shall lavish on the faithful and the true when I am once tribune, and have power to switch down these flies that still vex us with their stings. As for you, Jew," he said, turning to me, "I thank you for preserving my life. I enrol you at once in my service as Tiberius wished me ; and though I detest your nation, I present you with this gem as a mark of my gratitude."

As he spoke he drew from his finger the splendid Grecian gem which served as his signet, and thrust it into my hand.



"No thanks," he said; "I allow no thanks—what I give I give as Jove gives, wishing no return."

"Behold a god!" cried a few of his parasites, and fell on one knee.

By this time we had reached the amphitheatre, and passed through the double colonnade, which was re-echoing with the roar and growl of wild beasts, the laughter and the earthquake applause of 80,000 people. We received our tickets at the door, and mounted to our respective wedges. The first glare of 160,000 eyes astonished me; for they were all bent, with gloating eagerness, on the struggling swordsmen in the sandy arena below, which was already marked here and there with patches of dull red. Strict order reigned in this vast assemblage. There was the imperial pavilion, with its Indian hangings and purple canopy—on one side the vestals, saintly and demure, on the other the senators and the knights. Here sat the past tribunes, prætors, and other magistrates; on the left the freedmen

and ambassadors. Even the married and unmarried sat apart; and the young men, noisy and enthusiastic, presented a strange contrast to their graver tutors, who sat behind them. In the third row were the women, with the rabble behind them; and on the highest bench of all the servants of officers of state, and other favoured persons. An immense mast, rising in the centre of the circle, round which the shrieking, cursing, and furious combatants drove each other, formed the support for a vast awning of striped canvas, which kept the fierce sun from the spectators, and threw a strange-coloured light on the thousands of eager faces.

At intervals of the games, when a gashed body had just been dragged out by the slaves' hooks and ropes, or the down-turned thumbs had cast despair into the staggering gladiator, as he reeled, faint and giddy, supplicating mercy with a despairing and filming eye—a sudden fountain of cool water, quickened by perfumes, threw a freshening gust into the heated air, and



awoke the smiles of the ladies, whose fans moved like clusters of coloured flowers shaken by the wind. A rope fence, and a railing with spikes and rolling timbers, guarded the lower seats, where Sejanus and the noblest of his adherents now placed themselves. The spring of no leopard, however fierce—the plunge of no lion, however savage—could there endanger the spectator, though it might drive him back pale and dismayed.

When all these things grew clear to my eyes, and I could look fixedly down, I saw a procession of gladiators enter, two-and-two, to the blast of straight trumpets, and the impatient, fitful beat of drums; there came some mounted—Moor and Greek, Syrian and German; others on foot, matched in height and muscle—Sardinian and Pannonian, Gaul and Arab; some half naked, and others fully clad, in closed helmets, breastplate, and greaves; the *fishermen*, with their knotted nets stained with blood, and their deadly tridents—the pursuers with their short strong swords and long square

shields, blazoned with eagles and thunderbolts.

Smiling grimly at the plaudits and mock cries of "*Habet!*" these fierce butchers rode and trampled round the ring, clenching their fists, or swaying their weapons; a few rubbing their shining oiled limbs; others fastening firmer the deadly cestuses, which covered their immense hands and arms; some smiling at friends in the seats above them, beat the air to express their confidence in their hopes of victory; others whispered in the ears of their antagonists, or felt the swelling muscles of their own arms.

I saw, as my brain danced, blow and stab, and thrust and parry—I felt as in a dream, till an unusual stir in the amphitheatre below aroused my attention.

In the centre of the sandy ring, covered with dusty sweat, and streaming with blood from a chop in the shoulder, strode a young Greek slave, perfect in form as an Achilles, agile, symmetrical, and graceful as a young leopard. His beautiful face, though flushed,

was calm, and bore an expression of winning frankness. He had already slain a huge black slave who had striven to entangle him with a net, and a Nubian horseman who had attacked him with a javelin. Now, mounted on his wounded horse, he reined up his steed, and prayed for mercy for the love of Zeus; and he looked at the young men, "by the white-armed Aprodite;" and he looked up at the circle of the ladies, then, sweeping in a gallop round the arena, he held up his bleeding hands to heaven. His fine clear voice sounded distinctly in the hush.

"I have a father," he said, "O Romans, an old man, who waits by the banks of the Eurotas for the boy his son, hoping once more to embrace him, and to die in his arms! Sons! spare me, for the sake of him who is your father! Fathers! spare me, for the sake of him who is your son!"

A murmur of applause rang round the ring at this brave lad's appeal; the majority were for mercy. A few malcontents alone

were loud in their contemptuous hisses, and kept their hands turned conspicuously downwards. The superintendent of the games looked towards Sejanus' seat for his casting vote.

Sejanus was vexed at the want of enthusiasm displayed at his entrance, and determined to show his power. Stepping from his seat, he passed into the royal pavilion, and stood up, amid the shouts of his more immediate followers.

"Silence the rabble!" he cried, and the trumpets of his retinue sounded.

"Pit two of our Grecian prisoners against this runaway actor," he cried, haughtily; in a few minutes the doors of the dormitories opened, and two fresh antagonists stalked slowly out, looked up and round, and then, poising their axes, advanced with a nod to each other to the attack.

I saw the brave stripling dismount and kneel for a moment on the sand, heave a deep sigh, then, singing a war Pæan with a faint voice,

on to the combat. Victory appeared to him hopeless, death inevitable.

Sejanus, still vexed and irritated at what he termed the insolent demeanour of the populace, seemed to take an inhuman delight in the prospect of the approaching destruction of a stripling on whom the populace had heaped the applause denied to the favourite of the Emperor.


“He has it !” he cried, standing erect, and straining his eyes to anticipate the blow—  
“he has it ! No ! The bungler—and run through the arm too ! Serve him right. What’s come to my old gladiator of Rhodes ?—old Sepho, who felled the three Germans in one morning ? He gets too fat : he shall have a turn at my country mill, to bring him into wind ; or we’ll chase him with a lion, to see if that’ll give him a quicker eye and a surer foot.”

Stung by these taunts, which reached him through the medium of the growing murmurs—for the fickle populace were beginning to

get weary of one combatant so long holding the championship—the butcher of Rhodes, well known for his strength and ferocity in the ox-market and the slaughter-houses of Rome, as in the frequent seditious risings of the suburbs, drew back, and, swinging his weapon, drove it with prodigious force at the shield of his young antagonist. His brutal scheme seemed to be for a moment successful. The youth reeled at his first blow, and, falling on one knee, bent as if dangerously wounded.

The cheers rolled like thunder round the great amphitheatre. But, just as the burly gladiator stooped to strike him a lopping blow, the youth leaped back, and stabbed him to the heart with a fierce side-thrust. The giant fell heavily, and the youth, removing his helmet, wiped his brow and then his sword, shouting a thanksgiving to Zeus.

During this time an old Greek gladiator, a third, who had remained leaning against the rope-netting that guarded the podium, with his



back turned to the combat, had been employed busily, with a tremulous hand—for he was old and worn—in tying up the laces of his sandal. It was evident that he disdained to assist in so unequal a combat, and reserved himself for some greater danger.

A thousand voices crying, “No sleeping!” “Down with the youngster!” roused his thoughtful and perhaps now phlegmatic nature. Tightening his belt, and swaying his axe, he strode deliberately to the fight. Seeing him coming, the discomfited man struck fierce and faster. It was evident the youth’s hour had come.

But at that instant a gleam of recognition lit the old man’s eye.

“My son!” he cried, “my Crito!” in a moment he had embraced him, and struck down his last antagonist, who fell dead, cloven to the chin.

At that moment, Sejanus, seizing the bow and arrow of an archer of the guard who stood guarding the entrance, lodged a shaft

in the old man's breast. Staggering towards his son, he fell in his arms, and expired without a groan.

"To the lions with him!" cried the favourite—"the lad escaped by a trick!"

But the moment the attendants broke in to throw him into the dormitories, a tumult, which had hitherto been lurking in secret contempt at this deed of blood, broke into open mutiny. Benches were broken into weapons, ranks and orders were mingled, the ladies shrieked and fled, the boys huddled back in confusion. In vain the herald called order, and the trumpets sounded the signal for the combat of beasts. A band of the more daring broke down the nettings, and, leaping into the ring, bore off the young Greek in triumph on their shoulders. Others, putting a papyrus crown on the bound-up head of the dead gladiator, thrust him into the imperial seat, from which Sejanus, attended by a strong guard of adherents, clients, and slaves, had now retired. Others, heaping up broken



spears, shields and seats, raised a funeral pile for the dead Greek; some strewed on it their robes, while others ran for torches.

"This is the climax of this wretched insolence," said an old soldier to me; "Jove first maddens those whom he is willing to destroy."

"Is such a man fit to reign?" cried an orator, mounting on a bench.

"No—not to live!" cried a hundred spectators, waving their swords.

"The grain fleet is wrecked, citizens," said a baker, evidently rejoiced at the news, "and we all know what that is an omen of."

"Not of cheap bread, so hold thy tongue, short-weight," said a woman in the crowd; and the baker fell back with that painful smile which shows that a man is abashed.

"What I say is," cried a fisherman of the Vesta Street, "that the plebs don't get enough feasts, and bread tickets, and fish get so scarce an honest man can't live."

“ Well, then, there is all the more room for you,” said the virago, clearing a way with her tongue; “ and for what good deeds, can any one tell me, is this blood-sucker to be made to-day tribune? ”

“ To the senate-house! ” cried a loud-voiced fellow, who gave the catchwords to the mob.

Partly out of curiosity—for I cared not where I went—I followed the crowd to the temple of Juno in the Capitol, where the senate was now sitting. I was surprised to find every avenue guarded with troops of the Prætorian guard, which Sejanus himself commanded. I observed they got in knots and whispered, and that their officers occasionally passed through their ranks, as if verifying their watch-word.

“ He promised us three hundred sesterces a man,” said one veteran as I passed, casting up the items on a drum-head as he spoke, “ besides a public banquet to the citizens, and

free shaving for a year. But hang the citizens—that does us no good.”

I wondered who had offered this largess ; but when I asked, the soldiers laughed—their white teeth showing through their black beards ; and one of them said—“ Who?—why, who but the old fellow without hair ? ” Now I knew this was the soldier’s nickname for Tiberius ; and I augured mischief, for I remembered the mysterious hints of Macro, and knowing his fierce and crafty nature.

“ What is the matter with old Macro ? ” said one, breaking into the circle, and clapping a centurion on the back with a blow that would have felled a tailor—“ he spits fire and looks dangerous. I wouldn’t let such a firebrand be in the senate.”

“ He don’t put up his horses with the new king—that anyone can see.”

“ Not he,” said another. “ He doesn’t like anyone to be his charioteer.”

While I was standing listening to this gossip of the Cæsarians, who were full of what

old Crassus would have done years ago had he, only got to Parthia with twenty eagles, when a slave of Tiberius ran up to me. He bore sealed tablets and a roll, and put them in my hand. I opened the tablets. They were from Macro. The letter ran :—

“You have been false to Tiberius, and deserve death. To redeem your life read the roll the bearer will give you in an hour’s time in the senate-house. The guard have orders to let you in. Say aloud—‘This by the last courier from Capri.’ “MACRO.”

Concealing the roll beneath my cloak I was at the senate-house at the appointed time. I entered and found a creature of Sejanus speaking of the tribunate which the Emperor was about to bestow so justly on his favoured subject, and proposing that his statue should be placed in the holy circle of the Pantheon, into which even Augustus himself had professed himself unworthy to be admitted.

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A buzz of servile applause ran round the room, and Sejanus, snuffing up the incense, sat with his arms folded, in his own estimation, if not a god, at least a Cæsar elect. Great schemes of dominion were revolving in his mind, perhaps, too, a plan of conquest in Britain, or means of bringing flamingoes quicker from the East, and transporting fresher to Rome the oyster which in the Bay of Baiæ is known as "the ear of Venus."

On seeing me Sejanus nodded, and every one was silent. He rose—"I see, senators," he said, "the man that, I am told, was to bring the grant of the tribunate to me from Tiberius—may he read the roll he carries, O senators?"

"Let him read," cried a dozen voices.

"Hush!" cried a lean debater, well known and dreaded in Rome—I suppose by a prepared plan of Tiberius's—"I would first crave leave to denounce to the tribune elect and the Emperor, a man who, abusing the con-


fidence of Cæsar, has deluged a certain city of Italy with blood—has carried off honest men's wives as slaves—has misappropriated public money—has given to the lictors rods, good citizens—has, in a word, been false both to gods and men. What, O Sejanus and senators, should be such a man's doom?"

"Death!" cried Sejanus; "but in what city lives such a wretch, and what name does he disgrace?"

"The city is Rome," said the debater—"the wretch's name is Sejanus—soldiers!" (here he shouted to the guard) "seize this man!"

I remember that at this moment, as if at some pre-arranged signal, the temple doors burst open, and the soldiers rushed in, followed by a mob fierce as wolves and blood-thirsty as tigers.

I remember a whirlpool of swords striking, clashing, hewing, all at one red-plaited robe, all at one groaning, cursing, screaming human creature. I remember a storm of slaves, with ropes dragging out with shouts a dead, man-



gled body. I remember a weeping woman in a white mantle falling on the body, and being instantly trod to death. The shouts were as of many seas. Suddenly a stone from a sling struck me to the ground—I saw a pale face crowned with thorns appear in the air—and awoke to find myself in—BEDLAM!

INTRODUCTION TO SIDERFIN'S  
WELSH STORIES.

A MONTH had now passed, and we were still fast locked in amid the huge blocks of ice—those links that winter had welded together to form one vast frozen chain around our tight little ship, the *Stormy Petrel*.

It was about five days after the reading of my eccentric novel had commenced, that Captain Beaver determined to cut a channel in the ice, so as the better to moor the vessel for the winter season out of the reach of the toppling bergs, whose fall by night used to seem to me as if the very pillars of the world had been thunder-struck and were falling.



The work took us fourteen days to accomplish. We began by scratching out deep lines with the boarding pikes, then setting groups of men to cut the pieces across with ice-saws into diagonal blocks, which the seamen, with their usual fun, ingenuity, and heartiness, contrived to affix sails to, and so towed them out on to the wide ice-fields beyond the channel.

It was a grand day when the vessel was dragged finally into the ice-harbour, crushing the pan-cake ice of the night's growth before her. We had decorated her with flags, because it happened to be Captain Beaver's birth-day. And we should have fired cannon in honour of its being also Christmas-day, but we were afraid of bringing some ice-bergs as tall as churches down about our ears.

That evening, when we had turned in, we had extra grog served round among the men, and a fiddle set going for those who liked to dance and sing. The officers, however, and the older and staidier men, adjourned to the

state cabin to hear the first chapter of Siderfin's bundle of Welsh legends, one of which was to last the night, serving well to divert our mind from our dangerous position there in the Arctic Seas.


## THE MIDNIGHT MEETING.

### CHAPTER I.

THERE are few people who have travelled through North Wales with any eye for the beautiful or love of the sublime, but must remember the Vale of Festiniog. From the top of the Merionethshire mountains, that belt it in like old grim warriors, jealous guardians of the enchanted beauty, a wonderful panorama is presented to the view. From either Hawks Mountain, or the White Mountain, Moel Gwdion, or Myndd Mawr, the river Dwyrd may be seen winding its way, singing like a released captive, as from some dark rift in its parent rock


it makes its way with gladness to the ocean weltering in the horizon. Before us lies Cardigan Bay, and far beyond the vast altar pile of Snowdon stretches the sea-coast of Caernarvon, glowing in the sun. Every spot is surrounded by a halo of legendary recollection : here runs the half-obliterated Roman road, there the line of the first English march.

So hemmed in is this beautiful vale, that lies calm as a tarn, hollowed out between these giant mountains, that at once guard and hide it from the rest of the world. Here turbulent chieftains have waved the dragon banner ; here the steel-clad chivalry of the Normans have encamped ; thither, long ago, have the Roman legions won their way from their strong station of Segontium, the ruins of which may still be seen without the walls of Caernarvon. 'Tis one of the fairest and most peaceful of the Welsh valleys ; more calm and pastoral than the savagely grand Llanberis, more



retired and wild than the modernized Llangollen. The rude village of miners at the head of the vale, the cataract of the Cynval below, the wooded heights, the rippling stream, now gliding gently on, now chafing with obstructing rocks that bar its progress to its inevitable goal, all contribute to make the scene one highly characteristic of a mountain country. The approach to this hidden spot Nature has carefully barred against intruders; for her wildest beauties are to be disclosed only to the united spell of labour and of love. The country is savage, bare, broken, and beautifully wooded; while here and there large masses of rock, that no time could crumble, yet shivered by frost, and lightnings, and the thunderbolt from the mountains above, rise up from the thick underwood, clouded over with purple heather; while from fissures in their surfaces springs up the beautiful foxglove, like a flag waving from a ruined tower. At the present day, the barer tracts are divided by rough stone

walls, loosely built, straggling in irregular lines, bemossed with age, and flecked and stained with white lichen, like the ancient ramparts of a rock fort. These walls are covered with trailing bramble and toothed fern, which nod mocking over the ruin, and wave in the wind to salute the passing traveller. Everywhere through the mossy bank oozes forth limpid water, trickling down in diamond drops, or rippling on with a gentle, gushing sound, that refreshes the ear like the memory of music. So it is by every road and on every mountain : "Deep answers unto deep at the sound of their water-pipes." So it is throughout Wales : torrent shouts to torrent, cataract roars to cataract, stream calls to stream, rivulet whispers to rivulet, while the deep-voiced thunder of the storm overhead, on some day of elementary tumult, seems like the cry of a chiding angel to the spirits of the waters. Around this vale stretch, in undulating masses, the contorted roots of Snowdon, and the bare, deso-



late marshes of Port Madoc, athwart which Harlech, once the dwelling-place of kings, looks over the sea.

Round the vale itself, mountains covered thick with oaks slope down to the narrow and rocky bed of the Dwyrd; while to the distant north the great White Mountain towers above its brethren, who have seen wild deeds pass beneath their eyes—scenes of murder and of patriotism wrought out in their stony recesses and darksome caverns. Here and there a black crag, dark as if seared by the thunders of centuries, recalls scenes which the cultivated fields, yellow with the harvest, or green with the youth of spring, almost belie. In these hanging woods lie unknown beauties, from their inmost heart comes up the rush of concealed streamlets, or the roar of the falling rapid. The Dwyrd is a type of the mountain stream in its most perfect loveliness. Foaming along, it wanders careless as a youngster or a prodigal, chafing at the rocks that block up its bed and shine through its pure waters, washing


over their black and polished surfaces ; now rippling over pebbled shallow, where the fish leaps at the fly ; now lashed to rage by some strong barrier, through which it forces a way beneath huge piles of stone, from which grow wild flowers that nod over the tiny wave, and mirror their neglected beauty in the crystal, like village maidens at Eve's first mirror ; then in gloomy silence or calm repose, as if weary with the conflict so lately ended, and so soon to be renewed, flowing softly, and lingering in deep, black, silent pools, overhung by nodding hazels, or lit up by the gleam that the silver shaft of the birch throws upon the momentary darkness ; haunt for the water-spirit, bath for the wood-nymph, favourite resort of the Welsh peasant-angler, who knows well that under mossy stem and rotting log lurk what he tells us, in very bad English, are "vary big trouse" (brellyll) : on goes the stream through its varied pilgrimage to the wide ocean, bursting out from its dark haunts, where the sun seldom breaks through the star-



proof covering of matted boughs to rejoice again in the sunlight and purer air, like a released captive. To where the trees form but a light-woven tabernacle above its head, and with a shifting golden light of emerald it flows between broad deep banks, through meadows fringed with wild thyme, where the bee dwells the summer day through, and where in the hottest noon, when the reaper sleeps, the glistening dragon-fly and the yellow-banded fly skim over its surface, or swell the silver sound of falling waters with the tiny but shrill hum of their minstrelsy. And in every field around are little rills, pouring in their little tributes of dark peat waters gathered from the swamp and the morass ; and if you climb any of the mountains that rise above the vale, making your way with much difficulty and some danger, by dint of sure eye, firm foot, and trusty hand, clambering over loose rocks, the haunt of foxes, you will hear, long ere you have reached your watch-tower, the sound of water-springs distilling for it through the

thick, green, soft moss beneath your feet ; and if you scoop it away with your hand, as a Druid might have done as he clomb to his rock-altar, you will see the pure lymph come bubbling up between your fingers till it forms a little tarn around you, where the wolf and the eagle might have drunk ages ago.

But it is to a spot even still more beautiful, and some distance to the right of the vale, on the river Cynval, that we would now lead you. It is a warm summer evening, and the swallows are skimming for their prey over the marshy and dewy meadows. The Cynval is situated in a deep glen, hidden by dark woods, through which a winding and scarcely defined path leads, by broken steps of rock, to a small plateau, hung over by shelving masses of rock and half hid by underwood and winding roots of the trees that cling together above, scarcely wide enough to afford footing for one person. Below you—sheer below you—without one obstacle between you and death but a frail bush, or frailer flower, gapes a deep narrow



chasm, walled by precipitous and smooth-surfaced rocks, of a reddish tint, as if the hue of sunset were petrified upon them. On the other side, and far below you, arched over and rendered dusky and gloomy by the depth of shade, a waterfall leaps madly down, pouring its foaming, narrow flood of water over rough angular masses of black rock, that are all but hidden by the silver veil of spray and the bubbles tossed up into the air to catch the rare sunbeam ; and form in rainbow-hues another and a still more transient form of beauty. It glistens at night in the moonbeam like a torrent of molten silver, flashing in bright radiance through the coal-black foliage, throwing a shade deeper than that of noon-day. To the double ledge of rock it steals along as if it were heedless or unconscious of its danger, till with a roar and a splashing torrent it falls sudden to the narrow chasm below ; after gaining which, like one in the calm triumph of escape, who has left its baffled enemies far in the rear, with spent fears and abated force it steals

along the vale in open day, a brawling streamlet as peaceful and noiseless as its fellows. Less sublime and terrific than the Pistylls of South Wales, the falls of the Cynval have still an exquisite beauty and unrivalled grace, that steal imperceptibly to the heart. Their gentle voice is the very whisper of Nature herself. How beautiful in the calm peacefulness of a June evening, when a regal sunset is glowing overhead, reddening the western trees, and throwing a melancholy, departing, diminishing light upon the ceaseless torrent! There was something wondrous in the ceaseless volume of water, with its surging thunder, its dewy spray, and embowered rocks, with the dim, obscure recesses, like caverns in which the wood-nymphs sport, and the grey crags peering forth amid the sunlit wood.

Follow this stream up the valley, and every foot you traverse will present new scenes of beauty, eternally varying. Now it steals along, creeping forth wondrously from deep

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red pools in the hollows of crags worn smooth by the torrents of centuries, now it rages along as if some water-spirit had invested it with all the power of evil, and, sweeping massive fragments in its course, it falls full forty feet to the bed below ; now splashing in tawny-coloured volumes, edged with foam, over shelves of table-rock, and now stealing in a deep but narrow current, under vast horizontal crags that bridge over and almost choke the stream.

Equally varied in character are the precipices that edge the bank : they slope in wooded tiers to the water's edge ; they rise in perpendicular ramparts of immense height, that seem to shut out the very air of heaven ; again in broken ramparts of unequal height, they sink gradually to the stream's brink. What a wild chorus the waters make ! I hear mingling the full diapason of the torrent, the silver ripple of the rill that drips down the precipice, the distant plunging and intermittent

thunder of the cataract, and the throbbing plunge of the nearest fall.

But the wildest scene of all is where the stream grows deeper and more fitful, and is half swallowed up in deep "pots," as the peasants call them, which the summer's heat dries up, and the winter's overflowing fills again, as it wears year by year a deeper channel in the rock, and slowly hollows out a new course for its impetuous pent-up water. Here from the middle of the river's bed rises a grey throne of rocks almost isolated from the bank; on the rough summit of some ten feet grow a thousand wild flowers, which shed their leaves upon the water, and are borne away by the tiny waves that are dashing ever unceasingly round its base, as if shouting for its victims, and cover the narrow pier of stone that binds it to the shore.

On this pinnacle, still attainable by the lonely fisherman, who clambers up here to throw his line with greater advantage into the ripple below, and sit by the hour in mute



communion with the spirits of the wood, the air, and water, that seem to lurk around him, and to be invocable by any spell sufficiently powerful, tradition says some magician, in league with Apollyon, once sat and hurled his curses into heaven. Here a kelpie might whisper weird secrets to the water-wraith, who shrieks over the drowning traveller when the storm is at the wildest, and who waves in yon red pool its long, black dishevelled locks, weltering amid the discoloured foam, where the over-shadowy rock, lit so brightly by the golden moon, sheds so deep a shadow upon the spot, when the storm has lulled, that the heavens seem to grow blue again as you look up from this chasm.

Truth, however, in this case, as is usual, little less romantic than fiction, affirms that this magician bore the homely name of Hugh Lloyd, and was an old Ironside of Cromwell's army, who retired to these his native solitudes to die in peace. It was in such places as these—wild spots left unfinished by nature,

and still half-chaos—that the Scotch Covenanters assembled to pray in secret, where the sound of their psalmody might be drowned by the roar of the waters. Far above this spot, which is, indeed, immediately contiguous to the cataract, the stream is joined by another rill that meets it at a right angle, leaps to meet it, dashing its waters in a thin veil over a broad tabular rock, and after this junction they flow on together in peaceful union, like a calm old age after a stormy and tempestuous youth. A mile higher up, among the hills, there is another fall of a very different character. Here to the left, at the foot of crag and mountain, embedded in marsh and bog, half-covered with rush and peat, and intersected by cuttings of deep black water, are many lakes visited only by fishermen, their shores strewn with grey pebbles, treeless, bare, and desolate. To the right, the country slopes into broad, bare, smooth, precipitous, green hills, like mole-hills grassed over.

Here, between two of these green, rounded,



unbroken hills of enormous height, and where the trustiest mountaineer can scarcely get a foothold, through a very narrow black pass, a torrent of yellow water pours its foaming stream over a fall of some forty feet, with a sound quite appalling in that drear loneliness of solemn solitude. Below, it sinks into a dark channel, black as Lethe with the ooziings of the peat swamps. It is a beautiful sight to see, towards sunset, a storm beat up hither from the sea; breaking through lurid clouds dyed red with thunder. The sun at times, piercing these, will burst forth with all its splendour, spite of some envious cloud, bent—

To dim his glory and to stain the track  
Of his bright passage to the occident,


and shedding a rich and concentrated lustre on the peak of one mountain alone, like some priest pouring on a monarch's head the royal benediction, invests it for a few short moments with all the glory of Sinai at the moment of Transfiguration. Then suddenly a mist of grey darkness will drive up the valley from

the sea, and in an instant the rain pour down in drenching torrents on the luckless traveller and fisherman or the miner returning from his labour in the evening. It blows past, and again a golden vapour of clouded radiancy flashes past us stealthily, the storm following on its track like a pursuer. It seemed like those clouds, at first no bigger than a man's hand, and afterwards large enough to cover the whole earth, that, in the Khoran, Mahomet says, God has sent at sundry times and in divers places to destroy sin-spotted cities.

## CHAPTER II.

It was almost the sunset of a June evening, 16—, when a man seated himself in a meditative attitude on the throne of rock which we have before mentioned. He looked anxiously at the setting sun, took off his plumed hat, laid it beside him, drew his Provant rapier, flashed it in the sunbeams, drew a pistol from a secret hiding-place beneath his short cavalier coat, cocked it, handled the lock, and put it back into its lurking corner. He then stood erect, and looked up at a path scarcely visible in the underwood but to a practised eye, still nothing stirred. He shook his head like one dissatisfied with

his glance. "Duw a digon" (God is enough), he muttered with the voice of one who despaired of his cause, and has all depending on a venturous stake; then he bent his head upon his hand, his dark plume falling over and hiding his features. With the sunlight falling upon his noble face, overcast with such a deep air of melancholy, he might have seemed to a poet a fallen monarch musing over his fate, or our own first Charles deploring the fury and fanaticism of his subjects in one of his solitary hiding-places. The stranger was of a fair complexion; his features were almost Grecian in the beauty of their outline; over his forehead and shoulders fell dark clusters of hair, that hung upon his rich lace collar, and contrasted, as the old painters knew so well, with the dark velvet of his doublet, and the soft shadows thrown by his short cloak. But his meditations had not lasted long when a sound caught his ear in the thick copse on the right bank, and the practised ear of a soldier



heard it above even the fall of the torrent. In a moment, with the practised foot of a mountaineer, and of one who had scaled both the rude ramparts of nature and the weak stone piles with which man attempts to baffle his brother-worm, in an instant he had hid himself behind the largest rock, watching the cause of the disturbance, with the cool determination of one practised in warfare, or rather with the keen, fiery eye of a panther waiting beside some forest pool for its prey.

In the swiftness of descent, however, a gust of wind caught the broad brim of the cavalier's hat, and whirled it far into the calm surface of the stream, down which it floated towards the fall. At the moment it fell, a louder rustling was heard among the trees, and from behind a sudden turning of the rock, richly hung with trailing ivy and rude tapestry of the birdweed and the flowering clematis, stepped forth a man, who, by his sombre buff band, red jerkin, steel skull-cap, and polished corselet,

seemed to be a dismounted trooper of the Parliamentary faction. Trampling a way to the water's edge, with an eagerness that his stolid and sour face would seem scarcely to have promised, he dipped a heavy halberd that he held in one hand into the stream, and soon drew the fugitive hat towards him. On the very edge of the fall he arrested it, not without difficulty keeping his footing on the slippery stones half covered by the water. Lifting the hat in his hand, and wringing the water from the dark plume, he looked at it with a gaze as expressive of astonishment as any face could display, that had never brightened at anything before but the sight of a full tankard, and whose brain had been addled by discourses of interminable length from the lips of the arch-rebel Prynne himself. Then, with the air of a huntsman, who, following slot, has traced a wounded deer by blood drops to the very covert, he commenced at once a diligent search for the wearer of the vain adornment. Tightening his belt, getting his halberd ready as if it were a

musket in his hand, and clapping on his sallet, or morion, firmer, the Puritan retraced his way slowly to the path which led to the front of the pulpit rock ; observing the flowers trodden down, and the bushes beaten aside as if by a heavy tread, he half shouted some Scriptural form of rejoicing over an outwitted enemy ; but checking himself with difficulty, he pursued his search with all the steady and inflexible perseverance of an old hound certain of the scent, but for a moment thwarted. Screening his eyes with his hand from the red rays of the setting sun, he strained them to catch a glance of some companion whom he seemed to expect, as he cautiously beat over twice every inch of thicket that could conceal a lurking foe. Then, apparently satisfied with the vigilance of his search, he seemed to think that on the other side, if at all, lay the ambush. For a moment he stood uncertain, one foot on a stone half covered with the water, the other booted foot on the rock of the shore, his head bent forward like an Indian's on a

war-party, his ear tense and strained to catch the faintest whisper of danger that might be borne upon the breeze, or that might pierce the deafening thunder and the ceaseless plunge of the water. It was a fine sight to see that hard stern soldier, with every sense braced, every faculty drawn at once into action. With the cautious instinct of a veteran, the trooper decided on the ford. Unbuckling his sword, lest its metal-mounted sheath should clink against the rocks, he held it in one hand, while with the other he quickly divested himself of his corslet, and hid it beneath a bush, lest the sun's rays glittering on its polished surface should catch the eye of some fugitive, lurking, perhaps, even now, like a hare trembling in its form, waiting, as if fascinated, for his captor.


But, for a moment, when all these preparations were completed, he stood, like one light-armed and equipped for a storming party, in hesitation. Over the mind even of this rude soldier crept a shadow of fear, of superstitious



fear—of fear rather of immortal than of mortal foes. Fanaticism had in him rather heightened than repressed the spirit of the age. In that moment, like the flash of heaven's fire, came up in his memory thoughts of tales that he had heard by winter hearths—of saints encountering the enemy of mankind in wild scenes like this, where the saints had sought to escape from the persecutions of their fellow-men. The soldier was one of those enthusiasts who formed, at this early period of his progress to supreme power, the very soul of Cromwell's army. He believed that the millennium was at hand, and that Christ waited only for the total defeat of the Dragon by the followers of the Lamb, to descend to earth, attended by all the crowned companies of the blessed. And it was thoughts of the muster that the devil was making of his forces, amongst whom Charles Stuart, those "gifted in the word" believed, would not be last, that now filled his mind. But he waved his hand, as if defying his invisible antagonist, and ex-

claiming half aloud, "There'll be hotter work than this in Armageddon," strode quickly across the stream. The second step was above his boot-tops; the third it ran shallower; with difficulty saving himself from a fall, as his sword flew out of his hand, and with something very like a curse, this son of Cain stooped for his weapon, that had fallen some feet off, with a ringing noise, upon a ledge of rock hidden by only about an inch of water.

With eager eye, and heart throbbing with excitement but not with fear, the cavalier had been watching every motion of his unconscious foe; not a muscle of his face had moved with his knowledge. Already he had clearly descried the rogue's intentions, and satisfied himself that he had as yet no suspicion of his hiding-place. His heart beat so loud that it seemed to knock with violence against his breast; he could not choose but hear it. Another stride, and the Puritan soldier had put his very foot upon the rock behind which he crouched;—he must clamber over—one ready foot on the




nearest tufts of purple heather and scented thyme, one hand above his head on the rough tufts of broom that grew from a higher cleft. Now was the time. Drawing his sword, the cavalier plunged it into the defenceless breast of the climber. Slowly his grasp relaxed, heavily he sank backward, and fell with a groan and a deep plunge on the rock below—the huge body of the dying man sank with a deep, dull, hollow sound, like that so well known to those who have seen a burial at sea; the scale clasp of his steel cap breaking and coming off in his fall, and the helmet rang as it sank and struck upon some concealed rock in the bed of the torrent. He never rose again; not even a groan showed that a soul had passed into eternity.

So sudden had been the scene, so true the blow, so providential the escape, that the cavalier for a moment remained as if entranced, gazing on the corpse that looked up at him, with pale, distorted face, through the clear water, which the blood, welling from the corpse's mouth and from a deep wound in the

breast, slowly discoloured and turned to purple. With a shrill scream a large hawk that, with a wonderful instinct and quickness of ear, sight, or smell, had already caught the scent of death around him, like some incorporated form of sorrow, hovered about his head, as if it would attack the living since the dead were not to be seen. With a tameness that seemed almost supernatural at the moment, it perched for a second upon a rock near, on which some drops of blood had fallen, and then flew up again, wheeling inquiringly around. With a quick impatience, the cavalier drew his pistol from the breast of his doublet, and was about to fire at the bird, but he lowered the point and replaced it, with a smile, in his doublet.

“It is well—I had forgot,” he said; “God prompts the poor bird to scent out the blood with which man bedews his earth. Let the bird of the torrent prey, if he will, on the flesh of this beggarly, scurvy man-hunter.”

“The blessing of the Lord and his saints be on thee,” cried a deep, low voice from the




thicket, that had not even waved or rustled at his approach, and an elderly man, clad in a cassock and band, advanced, and waved his hand in greeting from the shore. His features had a benevolent cast, yet overshadowed by the misfortune that had fallen on his own roof-tree, as on the kingdom at large, or both together, and his cheek was hollow, as if it was concealment and scanty food that had helped to dull his eye.

“Welcome, good minister of Christ, at our rendezvous,” said the cavalier, with a tone of glad recognition. “What tidings bringest thou from Caernarvonshire?—are the true men strong there?”

“God be thanked, they are, though for fourteen days I have lurked like an outlaw in a poor hut, hemmed in by bog and marsh, with no richer viands than a black loaf once in four days, and no better Xeres than some water as black as ink. And you, Sir Charles, where tarried you?”

“I have lain perdu for some five weeks—

they seemed centuries—in a wood-loft above the stable of a poor cotter, some dozen miles from hence, as merry as a scurvy rogue in the pillory, or a bear with a chain round his middle. But when I was just sharpening my rapier for a foray, I suddenly heard the jingle of sword against steel-bound saddle and stirrup. I looked forth through a hole no bigger than a mouse's, that I had made for breathing, and I saw a troop of horsemen, whose leader I knew was loyal to the backbone. I leaped out; such a leap no Pagan ever effected, joined them, and told my tale. Never was friend welcomed more cheeringly, for Deveril had heard that a pike had ended my days at Naseby. Never shall I forget, good doctor, the angry ringing of their swords! Never bride heard marriage bells with more delight. Half dead with cramp and dulness, I longed for a change; and would have greeted with joy a band of d—d fanatics, though they had come to strike off my head, which now seems firmer on than ever, after the loose way



in which it has been since yesterday se'n-night. Deveril told me that they were sent with provisions from Caernarvon, and with orders to break into Harlech Castle now beleaguered by that cursed malignant, Mytton; and they had heard that the people hereabouts were enraged at the exactions of the besiegers, and had by them concealed arms, which they would use had they once a leader."

"The glad news reached me too," said the doctor, sitting down, like one worn out with watching, on the nearest rock, "in my dog-kennel, and hearing of this lonely place, whither a well-affected peasant led me—by token, I paid him with my last broad piece and my blessing—I determined to tarry here, and offer a prayer to Heaven for the success of our cause, which is, God knoweth, so righteous. It wanteth but five minutes to the hour of meeting; we are to be under the north bastion ere eight, disguised as waggoners, and driving carts covered with canvas and driftings of hay, concealing stalwart men, and

a goodly store of petards, if there be need of such things. Pardon me, Sir Charles—pardon one who loveth thy honoured house,” said the doctor, suddenly rising from his seat, throwing himself on his knees, and seizing the hand of the astonished gentleman.

“Get up, get up, good doctor; such attitude becomes not one of thy sacred profession.”

“Get up, good doctor,” echoed the clear, youthful voice of a gallant stripling, who leaped from behind the covert of a hawthorn bush, and fell upon his father’s neck. “Forgive me, sire, and forgive the doctor, who did but try to conceal what he feared too hastily to disclose.”

“I forgive thee, with all my heart,” said the father, pausing for a moment in astonishment, and brushing back the rich clustering locks that hid the fine open brow of the young gallant who stood before him in all the pride and purple light of youth, flushed with excitement, and with his eyes sparkling with love and admiration at rejoining his father.



"But, by all the saints, what brought thee hither, my boy?"

"The love of God and my king," replied the stripling, drawing his rapier and flashing it proudly in the setting sunlight. "I was like a friar cooped up in my gloomy cloister, bound to pace quadrangle, while traitors prison kings, and cobblers aim at crowns—bloody crowns they shall have, I trow."

"Dost thou not remember, Charles, what immortal Will's *Richard* saith?—

No hand of blood or bone  
Can gripe the sacred handle of our sceptre,  
Unless he do profane, steal, or usurp.—

Well, but what didst thou do when thou lefst gown for corselet, and flat cap for helm?"

"Why, I sped down as fast as horse would carry, or rather some half-dozen; for some three good hacks fell dead on the road, in spite of sops of wine, as Henford used to tell us to give at such times. Damian called together the tenantry; armed them all;

turned off two fellows who would sing Psalms and expound the Word as they followed the plough; left behind old Jennings, who is too weak for harness; and brought me the rest into these fastnesses, where I thought we might strike a hard blow for our pious but unfortunate king."

"Indomitable Don Quixote!" said the father, turning his head to hide a tear of pride. "And how many buff-clad men hast thou got at thy back to follow the old banner?"

"But a poor dozen, father; and lame Tomkins is one of them, for he would not stay behind, though it's all over with him if his horse is once shot;—yes! even to hard-riding Jenkins and the keeper's boy, Long John, who knocks over a sparrow at a hundred paces with a musketoon."

"Oh! a truce, Charles, to your long list of paladins, who, if they are not such knights of the Round Table as your partiality would draw them, are at least trusty varlets and

loyal to the back-bone. But where are they? Have the Caernarvon men joined you?"

"They have, sire, and are picqueted in the valley above, ready to join us when I blow this bugle."

And, as he spoke, the gay-hearted boy seized a silver bugle that hung from his white scarf, put it to his mouth, and blew a blast loud and shrill. It awoke a thousand echoes from hill and mountain; they came like ripples following the parent wave, or like an army of fairies replying with shrill clamour to their chieftain, Oberon. Ere the sound had well died away, it was responded to by a horn.


"Why, thou art a second Robin Hood," said the father, laughing; "is he not, doctor, with his bugle, and his outlaws, and his Long John, with caliver for bow, and good sword for wood-knife?"

Again the bugle was blown—a mournful note, such as the rangers call the *mort*, that announces the death of the stag.

"There's danger in the wind, father, for that is the signal: we must defer our gathering then till midnight, when the peasants will be easier assembled, till then we must keep covert. If my sergeant report true, O! there'll be a pretty rising of scythe and pike."

"In the hot charge I would not preach to thee, Charles, but in the tactic I may bid thee tell each peasant to strap round him a bag of flour and whatever spare lead he may scrape together. We may be cooped up in Harlech for a month ere our brave Rupert send a vessel to our aid."

"Then, when he does, we'll break, father, like a storm upon them. The red lightning from the cloud is a poor trope to which to liken our charge. Whoop! up with King Charles, and down with the canting Roundhead!" said the brave fellow, with the head of a boy and the heart of a man—ay, and a brave man—as he threw up



his plumed hat in the air, and caught it as it fell almost into the water. As he stooped low, his eye caught the pale glimmer of the corpse. "Why, what's toward? Here's a murdered man! there's been foul play here. Help, father—drag him out."

"Quietly, gently," said Sir Charles, repressing an almost involuntary smile at the impatience and fire of the young soldier. "'Tis but a scurvy jackanapes that I knocked on the head but ten minutes since, as I would a mad dog if it came gaping at me, with all his white fangs showing."

"Compare him rather, Sir Charles," said the doctor, "more scripturally, to the enemy of mankind, who goeth about like a ravening beast, or, as the Vulgate more justly has it, *ut leo furens*—or, rather——"

"Let us drag out the drowned knave, and search his pockets; there may be something that may serve us. And if he have an

angel or two, it were pity they should rust."

So saying, the young gallant—already not inapt in that useful commissariat department of warfare, incorrectly termed by the vulgar, pillage—hauled at the body, and tilting up its legs, by the help of his father, upon the rock, proceeded, with all the coolness of a camp-follower, to ransack the dead man's capacious pockets.

"*Imprimis*—here's a pamphlet, entitled 'Crumbs of Comfort for the Chickens of the Covenant, baked in the Oven of the Word.' Cursed cant! let the trout digest what cavaliers can't;" so saying, he whirled the edifying volume over the fall. "And here's four groats—the Puritan's month's pay, I surmise. But here's—oh, here's the thing:—

" 'The Leaguer, Harlech, Six o'clock.

" 'The storming party advance from the lines one hour after midnight, and advance over the breach of the northern tower. Watchword—'Ahab.'

" 'MYTTON.'

“ Ah, Mytton, thou son of Belial, the prey shall be snatched from between thy teeth. But I had forgot to tell thee, father, a dragoon put into my hands a letter from William Owen but an hour since; I have it here. Plague on me, I have it not; I must have dropped it at the hostel, or somewhere — anywhere but where such a despatch——”

“ What is here?” said the doctor, who had taken off the dead man’s corselet, and had been fumbling in a pocket made in the breast of his thick buff jerkin, as he drew out a sheet of paper which had been torn impatiently open, and to which the silk thread and wax that had bound it were still depending.

“ God’s mercy on my shallow brain, it is the very letter. I dropped it, doubtless, and this bloodhound who dogged me hither, though he missed me by a wrong turn, picked it up as rich spoil for his general.”

"'Tis well I paid his reckoning, and rewarded him as Joab did Amasa, by a blow under the fifth rib, to use the villain's own profane language. Well then, good General Charles," said the father, with a voice of good-humoured banter, "how long then is it thy pleasure that we tarry here in ambush?"

"Till midnight," replied his son; "for there are Puritan stragglers abroad, and a stray shot would bring overwhelming numbers upon us, and frustrate every plan. Within an hour all will be quiet; at eight they set the watch, as the country is up, and their foragers are often cut off by the peasantry if their party be not large. I'll go and order the varlets to bring thee some pasty and sack hither, for there are both at our saddle-bows. Your old cavalier cannot go long without food, nor doth he care much whether it come from friend or foe."

With three bounds the youth leaped the





bushes, and was out of sight. With a contemptuous push the knight sent the Puritan's body back into the deep pool from which it had been drawn, and with a deep bubbling plunge it sank.

"A brave, noble-hearted fellow is Charles!" the father said, as he strode to the streamlet bank, and stretched himself at his full length upon the short thick grass, purpled with wild thyme, on which the doctor sat.


"He cometh forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber," said the doctor, his mind running on his professional readings, "and he rejoiceth as a giant to run his course."

"My good doctor," said Sir Charles, "you retain your divinity better than I; for these hard shifts and hard knocks rather drive theology out of my head, but I'm content to look up, as I do now, at the stars, and pray our great God to save me at the hour of need."

## CHAPTER III.

THE sun had long since set ; already the moon, through the thinner fissures of the clouds, poured her silver beams upon rock and mountain, covering them with the transitory snows of her silver light ; while on tree-tops the moonbeams shivered, turning the fall to molten brightness, lighting up even the dark nook where the dead lay, and throwing strange shadows everywhere upon this scene of fairy-land.

Ere many minutes had passed away, the youth appeared high up on the furthest path, marshalling the way to two stalwart troopers, who carried between them a basket



of provisions, indicative by its size of rich contents. Staring about them at a scene so unexpected, and making awkward salutations to one who appeared of high rank, they placed their load upon the ground.

"Wait above till the midnight signal is given," said the youth, "and let pickets be instantly set to guard against surprise."

"Your two heroes," said the father, "are rather awkward specimens of the knight-errant. Their bandoleers sit awkwardly, and their plumes don't hang very jaunty."

"Oh, they're mere recruits pressed yesterday, and don't know yet a morion from an iron pot, but their hearts are in the right place, and they'll serve. But what news, my father, from the southern counties?"

"Our royal master, when I left Oxford, was a fugitive, seeking refuge, it was supposed, in the charcoal-burners' huts in Hampshire; but the country was rising everywhere against the Rump, and Cromwell had enough on his hands, what with Roundhead members

and royal levies. All may yet go well, so the king lies safe till he can again burst forth like the sun."

"Yes, which goeth about from the one end of the heavens unto the other, and nothing hid from the heat thereof," said the doctor, unable to restrain a quotation, and rejoicing at the free use of that unruly member, the "tongue," after so long and compulsory a silence; "which word *heat*, as Stephanus observes, may rather be interpreted as 'the all-pervading life-spring.' "

"Oh, if thou must deliver a homily, good doctor, pray ascend yonder pulpit-shaped rock, out of the reach of our ears," said the youth, unmindful of the reproving glances of his father.

The doctor, abashed at this rebuke, shrunk back into his nook, and turning himself to a very quiet, mossy stump near him, continued to mutter, as if still discussing the knotty question, every now and then a word—such as "cestus," "pythikos," "adonai"—thus disclosing the polyglottic bent of his thoughts.

"Learn to bridle that fiery tongue of thine, Charles," said his father, "as well as thou makest that good war-horse Glennock curvet and caracole. But this is no time for rebuke," he said, seizing his son's hand, and pressing it in all the warmth of his heart; then smiling in that every-day hypocrisy by which men throw a veil over the best emotions of their hearts, he laughed as he added, "Now, rip open the fat paunch of that wallet, for my stomach is just in that state of revolt so well described by the old Roman in his parable. Dost thou remember the story—thou tall fellow of thy hands?"


But the youth's mind was far away. Drawing his rapier, and bending it almost double over his knee, he bade his father mark the generous temper of as true a Toledo as ever crossed the Channel.

"Where are thy good wits gone to?" said his father, as he seized the basket, and tore it open, warmly aided by the good doctor, just relieved of a satisfactory theory upon the word *cestas* and its Hebrew root. He drew

forth, with a triumphant look, two dark-brown pasties of a goodly size, and a plump bottle of sack, that looked light and golden when held up against the moonlight. Not many minutes had elapsed ere the knight and the doctor, (divested of his ragged canonicals,) were deep in the bowels of the largest pasty. Having summarily unsealed the flask by knocking off its head, they all took deep draughts and long pledges to "our rightful king;" their loyalty much increased by the hunger and thirst of some days past—a fast, if not quite as sanctifying as that of a Papist, at least as difficult to endure with patience.

Then, like tired wrestlers, they laid themselves down under a bush to rest, the knight leaning his head on a rich tuft of heather, the doctor on his canonicals, conveniently rolled up into a soft, yielding pillow, as conducive to sleep as one of his own sermons. Seated on a felled tree by the side of his sleeping father sat the young Cavalier, now looking at the sleepers, now musing, with hand on his brow, upon

the revels and masks of the vanished court. Over his half-sleeping fancy loomed grim faces of foemen—looks that dying men had cast upon him—the stern, proud triumphant eyes that look upon fallen enemies—changing to lovely faces and grouping maidens. Then his hand relaxed; he doubted the whole scene, and thought it was but passing in a dream, from which he fell into another and deeper abyss; thinking himself in his own quiet chamber, with the fire-light playing upon the arras, or lighting up the family portraits on the dark, glossy panels. He awoke; he looked at his watch with a catgut mainspring, that vibrated like a church-clock, but which, in those days, was an heirloom of considerable value. It wanted but ten minutes to midnight. His father and the doctor were still asleep. The doctor snored audibly; his father muttered in his sleep, and turned restlessly: “Up, faint hearts—upon them with the pike—remember bloody Naseby!” The doctor, catching and mingling the sound



with his dream, replied, as if awaking, though in the deepest depths of a weary sleep, "In the opinion of Johannes Turris Crematus, the word *nasetus*, rendered in the Hebrew *dijal*, should be——" Here he sank into an inaudible mutter, as if the real opinion of Johannes Turris Crematus were far too valuable for vulgar ears.

The solitude felt lonely to the madcap youth. He thought of the dead lying below, of the spirits, of the fays, of the elves. He must awake the two: the hour of rendezvous had all but come. But he paused, as every one would, before he shook off that sweet oblivious spell that weighed so gently upon their senses—that fairest portion of a sad life—that sleep that covered them, as Sancho says, "like a cloak." He waited till the watch-hand was approaching the hour, had reached, had passed. How restless, how swift, and how untiring is time, though the fool complains of his lingering! He shook them at the same moment by the arm. It was amusing to observe the different bias



of their returning senses. "Help! help! To arms!" cried the knight, and leapt upon his feet, with a poniard, hitherto concealed, shining in his grasp, his eyes staring; but at once restored to his senses, sheathing his weapon like one ashamed of an enthusiastic transport, he embraced the son whom he loved so dearly. The doctor, slowly turning himself, exclaimed with a dreary and protracted yawn, as if exhausted by his somniferous disputations, "The word *ceatas*, thus mistakingly rendered——" But seeing the wondering looks of the two spectators who bent over him, he yawned again—deeper, longer, and wider than ever—rubbed his eyes, apologised for the length of his sleep, and shaking himself with the reluctant air with which a poor man resigns the cup of oblivion slowly drawn from him, and of which no draught but that of death can be too deep, looked at his pleasant lair, and exclaimed,

"Verily, good Sir Charles, canst thou help me to the time? for it seemeth to draw near

to that hour which that worthy Arabian gentleman alludes to when he says, 'In the night when deep sleep falleth upon men.' "

"The time is past, I should think, by the deep bass you have so long kept up to the light treble of my breathing," said the young soldier, then unable to restrain a gibe at the inconsistencies of an amiable character, so strangely at variance with the scene and the thoughts which crowded in his own mind. "And if I can judge aright by half articulate whisperings, even in your dreams you have been digging for Hebrew roots, though not, I trust, in that barren soil where the adage says they generally grow ; why, you were engaged in a hot dispute about that knotty word *cestas*, on which, some four hours ago, you were about to deliver us an interesting discourse, of which we (*aside*, fortunately), hem ! I am sorry to say, heard but the text."

"You do too much honour, young gentleman, to my poor learning, but a disquisition on the subject I certainly have writ-

ten, and will at some convenient time read you."

But already the versatile youth grew weary of the good man's harangue, and exclaiming, "'Tis midnight, father," blew his horn shrilly. "Trali, trali, trala."

A pause of a moment or two, as if men were arousing, and it was answered nearer and louder than before. In another moment, a trampling and crashing was heard as some two dozen men made their way through the narrow paths, and ranged themselves in irregular order upon the bank. With a cheer they greeted their young leader, who, gracefully drawing his sword, presented it on his knee to his father, as a token of resigned command. His father returned it him.

"I will not command the brave fellows your own loyalty and courage have banded. I will be at thy right hand, will temper thy headstrong valour in the charge, and urge thee to fresh exertions when thy young heart is damped with defeat."


A louder cheer greeted words so worthy of so noble a father and so brave a son.

Every moment now peasants poured in, armed with scythe, and pike, and fork; rude goads, rough arquebuses, halberds as old as Elizabeth.

“What tidings bring the scouts?” said the young Cavalier to the oldest man of his troop; “but yonder is one; let him speak for himself.”

As he spoke, a dwarfish man, with long, ragged black hair, and keen eyes, pushed himself forward, with all the self-esteem with which the deformed seem invested by kind nature.

“I have not been near Harlech to-day, good sir; but yesternight the garrison was much straitened, so one of their deserters told me, they had barely oatmeal enough in half-rations to last two days more; and even now their food is rats, and hides, and messes of the weeds pulled from the ramparts. As I was playing the harp an hour ago at an inn



by the roadside, I saw two of Mytton's regiment pass. They had corselets on, and had been foraging, but they took no heed of me."

"How stands the country disposed towards the right cause?" said the elder knight.

"Well, they stay but for the rising, and the word, 'King Charles and the Cavaliers for ever!' and there'll be many a stout fellow's foot in stirrup, and many a matchlock taken down from chimney-rest."

"The array, in the words of old Ben, is 'somewhat of the fewest' to raise a siege," said the knight, whispering to his son; "but we know what bold hearts have done, and we know what they may do again."

"But there is no time for delay, if we march. Let's to horse!" cried the young man.

"Stay, stay, master general," said his father. "Sergeant, read the roll-call."


The officer read, and but one man was found missing—"Thomas Lewis, better known as Hardriding Tom."

"Who knows anything of him?"

No one answered.

“He can’t have turned traitor. A soldier says he has taken lately to say his prayers, and when he cursed him for it, and said there was enough time, he hoped, for such things as that, and asked him if he was going to turn Puritan and join Mytton and the Rump. Tom told him to hold his foul tongue, or he’d slip his knife between his ribs. Perhaps he’s proved traitor, and all is lost. But no gloomy forebodings. The fellow drinks beer as if he was at a continual *term*, and is thirsty as a sand-bed. I’ll wager forty crowns he’s dead drunk now, in a handful of straw, in our last hostel. I dare swear he’s drunk, but no traitor. He’ll join us, will Tom, when he hears the trumpet.”

Then, ascending the highest ground overlooking the stream, whose roar rendered his voice inaudible beyond the circle of the little band, all, both noble and commoner, knelt before the holy man, as, with glowing eye and irrestrainable emotion, he exclaimed,



“Let God arise—let his enemies be scattered—let those that are mighty flee before him.”

And then selecting from the stores of his memory verses suitable to the occasion, he continued, after a moment's pause,

“Plead thou my cause, O Lord, with them that strive against me, and fight thou against those that fight against me. Lay hand upon the shield and buckler, and stand up to help us. Bring forth the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me.”

And all the people assembled cried  
“Amen.”

But never on earth was that half-finished prayer to be concluded. Already the God to whom they prayed had frustrated those wishes, which his mercy thought unmeet for accomplishment.

“Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek—— Sir Charles—hush! hush! What are those sparks, like the fire-flies of Hispaniola, amongst the trees

that crown yonder craggy bank? They seem to move, and flit, and come nearer," he exclaimed; "or are they rather what the learned call falling stars?" suddenly breaking off, and pointing, with outstretched fingers, to the objects of his wonder and fear, for, with heads bended, none but himself could see the scene around.

"The Philistines are upon us!" cried Sir Charles, with a shout, as his men sprang to their feet and grasped their arms.

It was not a moment too soon, for the next instant pistol-shots and the distant clang of steel were heard, followed by a close volley, that poured upon them from their hitherto ambushed enemies, who now showed themselves in thick array on the opposite bank, headed by an officer, who appeared, from his plume, rich baldric, and proud bearing, to be of rank.

One trooper fell; a bullet had struck him; toppling from the plateau of rock,



he fell into the torrent beneath, its roar concealing the crash made by his descent. One other man was hurt in the arm, but could still handle his piece, and in an instant the scarf of the young knight had bound up the wound.

At a glance, the experienced eye of the old soldier had caught the dangers and the advantages of his position.

"Doctor," he cried, "ensconce yourself behind that jutting point, and keep close. Let each man fall behind the nearest bush or slab of stone, and reserve his fire, for there is hotter work ere we part."

In a moment every man had disappeared, as if they had sunk into the earth, or like Roderick Dhu's clansmen, but not before the fiery young Hotspur, whose ardour seemed irrestrainable as that of a war-horse who scents the battle, had snatched a musket from the hands of a trooper, and, taking deliberate and cool aim, fired at the leader of the Parliamentary

party, who, shouting, "Who is on the Lord's side—who?" was waving his sword, as if urging his men to some deed of daring from which they shrank.

"A murrain on the fool!" he said. "I saw the bullet leap from his head-piece as a hail-drop would skip off a cabbage-leaf."

"Let them be as the dust before the wind, and the angel of the Lord scattering them!" cried the doctor, peering from his hiding-place, but retreating instantly, as a stray bullet nearly deprived the English Church of one of her warmest supporters.


## CHAPTER IV

THE fire continued straggling and intermittent, not one Cavalier, however, being touched behind his stone rampart, while two Puritans fell apparently wounded, perhaps dead, and were instantly borne off by their friends to the rear. Now, however, imitating the tactics of their enemies, in perfect silence they advanced, taking advantage of every bush, stone, or inequality of the ground, to pour a volley upon their enemies or to save themselves.

The stripling's impatience could be kept in no longer. Rising on one knee, in spite of all the entreaties of his father, who lay beside

him, he placed his musket on a low ridge of rock, and fired at a soldier who had attained a point higher than that on which they were, and was about to discharge his piece with fearful effect. Down he went, like a prey the eagle has dropped from her eyrie, crashing as he descended, till he fell a shapeless mass on the rocks below. A cheer from his followers greeted the daring champion who so fearlessly exposed his person for their safety. He was still watching the result of his shot, when a well-aimed Puritan bullet cut off his white plume, and sent it floating below. With a frown his father pulled him down into the covert.

“Rash youth,” he said, “this is not courage; it is hair-brained, unreflecting madness.” Then turning to the doctor, who, ensconced safe behind a huge mass of projecting rock, was urging on the combatants, praising the best shots, condemning the bad, instructing each as to the peculiar deficiency of his aim, and shouting, “They rejoiced and gathered themselves together; yea, the very



subject came together against me unawares"—  
"Silence, good doctor; your shouts draw on us a warmer fire, and make our bullets the less effective."

The rebuked doctor instantly ceased his theological war-cry, and watched the fight silently, with as rueful a face as any old burgher who had strolled into Alsatia would a bully's brawl, advancing up a *cul-de-sac* towards him.

"I swear by St. Carlo de Borromeo, who is my patron," whispered Sir Charles to his son, who lay eyeing the enemy as the golden eagle of Snowdon might the falcon who has approached too near his eyrie, "I know nothing of war's stratagems if the villains are not going to throw some planks across the torrent and charge us. Were our party strong enough to hold this *tête-de-pont*, I would send a party of five round to wade the stream higher up, as we did once in Flanders, the sound of the water hiding the splashing of our boots; but, with this poor handful, we must make what play we can here.

Give the word round, Charles, that when they are past that first white rock beyond the pulpit we fire a volley, and that instantly ten of the best and bravest pikemen, with you at their head"—the young man's eyes sparkled with fire—"bear down upon them. I'll be at your side, and the rest must keep their pieces loaded, ready to fire when an advantage presents itself, or to press on at our back when need is the sorest. Let our cry be 'God and our king.'"

He scarcely had given the directions to the men, ere two Puritan halberdiers advanced, preceded by five skirmishers, who kept up a warm fire at every head that showed itself an inch above the defences that nature was so lavish of in that wild spot. With the ready speed of habit, impelled too by a sense of danger and a desire of distinction, they threw three broad, thick planks from a flat rock in the bank over some deep, wide pools, to another rock immediately contiguous to the pulpit, and beyond which a man might wade

and force his way to the opposite bank. In an instant three men, with pikes ready, advanced, and leaped upon it; a bullet pierced the first; the second, turning to save his comrade, was wounded as he crouched behind the rock. There was a moment's pause. With word and blow, from the bank, exposed himself to the bullets that whistled round him, their leader urged them on. As if stung by some biting taunt, four more, two and two, rush past; they cower—they reach—they pass the white rock. With a shout that rung high above the roar of the fall, the Cavaliers leaped up from rock and bush, and bore down upon the enemy, to meet them midway. At their head ran the young knight, closely followed by his father, waving his white plumed hat in one hand and his drawn sword in the other. With a dreadful shock they met. With push of pike, and blow of sword, and butt of pistol, curse and shout, and groan and yell, and splash, as the wounded fell to drown, or to be borne away by

the fall, bleeding, and waving their bloody or begrimed hands for assistance, till they came to the edge of the fall, eddied round for a moment, and were then swept over with a roar, as if the water exulted proudly in its triumph over weak man.

To it they fought, foot to foot, hand to hand, with noisy clang on helm and corselet, till the pools ran dark with gore ; fanaticism and party urged them faster on, and infused a deeper hatred in their hearts. No quarter was asked or given. To fall was to die. But though the Cavaliers were undisciplined, they were a band of brothers, men brought up on the same estate, and headed by those whom they had learnt from youth to respect, to love, and to obey. They were enraged at being thus caught like foxes in a net ; their hearts glowed with warm affection for a king whose very misfortunes rendered him only the dearer to his followers. They pressed the enemy ; they gained the planks ; hotter grew the fire ; as, surrounded by the enemy,



led away by uncontrollable and dangerous temerity, fought Charles; his father watched him like a guardian angel in the fray, warding off blows, throwing himself before him like a shield, directing his attention to danger, now praising him when he struck a good blow, and now checking his overhasty rashness. Suddenly, from a thicket close to the water's edge, leaped out two Puritan pikemen upon the temporary bridge, and, urging forward their companions, who were retreating before the impetuous violence of the young gallant, advanced upon him with their pikes full before their breasts. In a dark rank, two abreast and ten deep, the enemy drove upon him. Losing his footing of the plank, Sir Charles leaped upon the nearest rock and slowly retreated, glaring upon his enemies, like a boar at bay when he churns the foam and shows his white tusks ere he rushes at the hound.

With eager solicitude, forgetful of his exposed person, and of the bullets that flattened

themselves upon the rocks by his side, the father watched his son slowly retiring and making for the nearest covert to rally his men, whose bandoleers were now nearly empty. With a savage bound a pikeman drove his pike at the bare breast of the young knight; he parried it, and returned the blow with a fierce thrust, which, glancing on the breastplate of his antagonist, a dismounted cuirassier of Haslerig's regiment, shivered his blade to the very hilt. With the broken fragment the heroic youth stabbed his antagonist in the neck, just above the corselet, and he fell, still alive, but grievously wounded, into the stream. His companion, before the youth could recover himself, rushed forward to avenge his comrade, and thrust his pike deep into the lad's breast; and, at the same moment, a pistol-bullet of the Puritan officer, who had watched the fray with interest, drove into his brain. Charles fell dead, without a groan, into the arms of two of his followers.

To bear him to a bank, and place the body


with reverent care beneath the bush, where but a short hour since he was watching with a brain teeming with ambitious hopes, was the work of a moment. Then, with a deep howl of execration, every man leaped from bush and from behind rock, forgetful of life, and bore down upon the triumphing foe, who made the air ring with cries of "Down with the sons of Belial!" "Down with the armies of the Philistines!"

Every eye was looking for the slayer of their gallant young leader, every hand clutched his weapon firmer, every heart throbbed louder, and longed to be his avenger. But God had already sent one. Even the doctor, with streaming eyes, seized a pike, and exclaiming, "He that slayeth by the sword shall perish by the sword," brought up the rear in a gallant manner.

Who can picture the father? His blood froze at its source, his eyes were glazed, as if he, too, had felt the death-blow his son had received. For a moment he stood thus, and

then, like a she-bear robbed of her cub, he leaped upon the Puritan ; with one broad backhanded slash he cleft his jaws open till the very head gaped in two, and the wretch fell a horrid ape-like picture of death upon the body of his fallen corporal, who, shot through the brain, had fallen on his knees and blocked up the path to which he had led his fellows.

With a shout the brave men then rushed upon the discomfited enemy, at the very moment a band of loyal peasants, armed with scythes and rude pikes, tore down from the hills above, and hallooing cheerily, swelled their ranks. At the sight of the new allies, advancing like yelling demons, and holding torches in their hands—for the moon had now sunk—which flashed and flamed, and threw a red light upon the woods, the Puritans turned and fled. Halting as they gained the shelter of the woods, they then formed anew under the direction of their officers, and poured a close but ill-aimed volley at their new assailants, who now, clearing the planks of the dead,



were prepared to defile in force and fight for the possession of their last stronghold. There was a whispering together for a moment amongst the Puritans—of those at least of them who were not busied in bending over the wounded, or replacing their shattered weapons with those of the dead. Presently the officer whom we have before mentioned fastened a white scarf to a broken pike-shaft, and advanced towards the bridge, waving it in the air as a flag of truce.

“I demand a parley, with your leave,” he cried, “thou of the white plume.”

There were low growls of rage, as Sir Charles prepared to advance to meet him half-way. “Let’s have blood for blood,” cried one mutinous fellow, whose blood was now well up. With portentous face of chiding solemnity the doctor pushed the men back, placing finger on his lips, as already the two leaders had met.

“Knowest thou,” said the Puritan, without one indication of courtesy, although a

slight tone of pity seemed to pervade his words —“knowest thou, malignant, that thy men shed their blood without avail? Harlech, that thou wouldst have relieved, has fallen under the sword of that holy vessel, Obadiah Fight-the-good-fight-of-Faith, better known, it may be, to such as thee by his once profane name of John Mytton.”

“Harlech fallen?” said Sir Charles, even in the depths of his grief with difficulty repressing his astonishment at the unexpected news.

“Yea; finding from one of thy malignants who joined our ranks that relief was coming, we prepared to storm the hold at eight of the clock, but they surrendered at our first summons. Resistance, thenceforth, is hopeless.”

“Thou trustest too much on this poor victory,” said Sir Charles; “half Wales will presently rise at our summons.”

“To fight for a prisoner in a distant island?”

“Prisoner?”

“Yes, Charles Stuart, whom thou callest king, is now in durance in the Isle of Wight; I received but yesterday a despatch from my lord commissioner.”

“Generation of vipers!” said the doctor, who had crept up to the back of the general during the conference.

“Everywhere the Parliament is proclaimed, and Cromwell lays waste the rebellious provinces with fire and sword.”

“Let his name be blotted out of the book of life,” chimed in the doctor, “and his inheritance let another take.”

“Rather, schismatic sir,” said the Puritan unbending into a grim ill-favoured smile, “seemeth he likely to take to himself the possessions of others. We give thee twelve hours to disperse and gain the sea-side or thy own homes; after that, look to yourselves, for there will be a lion in the way.”


“The roaring lion,” said the doctor, “yea, the devourer of souls.”

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"We submit to your conditions," said Sir Charles, after a moment's pause of deep mournful thought, betrayed by the muscles that writhed like things of life upon his forehead, "since better may not be granted; and the less feel I for my followers, since I myself, to whom life is no longer dear, shall lose more than them all. But on one condition alone I yield: that our deserter be surrendered according to all rules of warfare on such hard-plighted treaties as these."

The officer whispered to those nearest to him, and within a minute they reappeared, dragging between them Hard-riding-Tom, his hands bound behind him with his own belt, his face wan with fear.

"Do unto him as seemeth good to thee. Farewell!" Then retreating to the shore, and speaking in a low voice to his followers, the Puritans disappeared as suddenly as they had come, a measured





tramp alone announcing their departure. Two or three remained behind, still looking at, perhaps plundering, the dying. The wounded had been long since carried to places of safety: these stragglers, too, soon disappeared.

"Does this villain deserve death?" cried Sir Charles, after a long and terrible silence, full of bitter thoughts of the past, and sorrowful anticipations of the future.

"He does," cried a dozen voices, advancing their pikes as if they would crush him like a reptile.

"Thou hearest the judgment of the companions thou hast betrayed," said Sir Charles, with a voice of slow, suppressed rage; "what hast thou to say why thou shouldst not suffer? for the blood of him whom thou hast slain still crieth from the wet earth."


"God's curses on ye all!" said the wretch, foaming with rage and pale with fear; "thy son struck me with his stir-

rup-girth, and swore at me for a country rogue, because, as I cleaned my horse, I forsooth sang a psalm."

"And was it for such a trifle as this that thou madest me childless among men? Take the white scarf, Corporal Gwyn, from the dead, reeve it over yon gnarled oak, and loop it round his neck."

The doctor fell on his knees, and exclaimed with an impressive voice, faltering with emotion, "God have mercy on thy soul!" The wretch the next minute hung a quivering, vibrating corse, a thing for the crow and the mountain falcon to feed their young with.

It was already daybreak, and the almost heartbroken father bent over the new-made unclosed grave. They scarcely could tear him from the corse, as, clasping it in his arms, he printed his hot kisses on the pale brow of the dead. Hastily they lowered it into the grave; and not an eye was dry when the doctor, pulling from a pocket of his gown a



much-thumbed prayer-book, read the beautiful and solemn prayers of the English Church, which seem almost to forget the sorrows of the living in the hopes of their joyful rising. With more than usual solemnity fell these words upon the ear as the deep voice of the doctor uttered them :

“Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower ; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay. In the midst of life we are in death.”


And never was amen uttered more fervidly than when the priest gave God thanks, and proceeded with the words so expressive of pious resignation :

“Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity ; we give thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased

thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world, beseeching thee that it may please thee, of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom."

AMEN.

There was no dismal sound of mould on coffin-lid; no hollow knell such as has often gone well-nigh to crack the heart strings. With a scarf bound over his face, his hands crossed upon his heart, his wound covered, his broad-leafed hat pulled over his fixed and open eyes, and his sword drawn, by his right hand, they buried the lad as a warrior should be buried, on a field not the less noble because but a dozen, and not a hundred, good men had yielded there their souls to God.



# THE MONASTERY OF THE FLOWERY PLAIN.

A TALE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

## CHAPTER I.

O villain! viper! damned without redemption:

\* \* \* \*

Snake in my heart blood warmed, that stings my heart :

A Judas and one thrice worse than Judas.

\* \* \* Terrible hell make war

Upon thy spotted soul for this offence.

*Richard II.*

O! it is monstrous! monstrous!

Methought the billows spoke and told me of it.

The winds did sing it to me; and the thunder,

That deep and dreadful organ pipe, pronounced


The name of Prosper; it did bass my trespass.

*The Tempest.*

It was the autumn of 1533, not twenty  
years since the sturdy apostle of the Refor-


mation had burnt the Pope's bull at the very gates of Wittenberg. The Gospel flame had spread through Germany like fire in the long dry grass of the Indian savannahs. Already it had burnt through to Switzerland, where Zuinglius had sealed his faith with a martyr's blood, and had spread on to the dark forests of the north, from whence it was so soon to sweep back, with all the impetuous fury of the ice winds, upon the hireling armies of the seven-hilled city. Already even kings had pushed forward to combat with pen or sword for the new heresy or the revival of truth, as it was alternately applauded with one name or branded with the other.

In our own land, state policy and the violence of a proud and sensual monarch, had opened the way for the Reformation, like some poor pursuivant that clears the way for a gorgeous cavalcade of the noble and the great. Never king sat upon a firmer throne. His father, a crafty mon-



arch, with the head of a shuffling diplomatist, and the toad heart of a miser, had been the trusty pioneer to smooth the path for his accession. Like his more debased prototype of France, the whole labour of his life had been to repress the bloated power of the nobles, to encourage the burgher class, and to balance them both by the dread of popular revolt. The good work done in France by Louis was pushed on in Italy by a Borgia, and perfected in England by the Eighth Henry: worthy trio—the vulture, the fox, and the viper—that still paved the way for the liberty of future ages.

But the good days had dawned in storm in England; not without a struggle gave up priest his jeweled cup, and abbot his chased chalice; slowly, and with agonised contortions, they had surrendered the keys of their store-chambers to the harpies of Henry. The ignorant peasants, misled by those who moulded their souls, had risen in arms, and



their banners had been emblazoned with the cross and the five wounds of Christ, to testify that, to defend the old faith of their fathers, they had thus traitorously banded together.

In this very year (1533) ten abbeys and sixteen nunneries had been suppressed, including those great conventual buildings, the Cistercian convents of St. Mary of Bellesden, in Bedfordshire, and the abbey of Furness, in Lancashire. This very year, ten thousand monks had been driven out as vagabonds, with but two angels and a gown each, to beg their bread; while 32,000*l.* of their rents were seized, and 100,000*l.* worth of their rich plate and jewels.

What wonder, then, at the number of the disaffected; for, with the great bark of Popery, laden with sins as a galleon with gold, in the deep vortex that she made as she sank, had gone down a myriad of fortunes. With every convent that fell, a swarm of the beggars, both within and without the walls that it had created, had been cast upon the world



to live by their scanty wits, and to feast, like the "palmer worm and the locust," upon the more numerous but less sympathising classes—on the noble who was too rich, and the peasant who was too poor, to share their griefs or to dole them alms.

It was an autumn evening, wanting but an hour to vespers, and the monks of Ystrad Flur\*—or the Monastery of the Flowery Plain, as the English called it—were assembled in their chapter-room. Anxiety sat on every face, as the whisper went round from monk to monk, like a watchword for the night, for prime was the usual hour for such meetings, and the subject must be one of unusual interest in those eventful times that could lead so strict an abbot to convene together the white-robed order at an hour so unusual in their ritual.†

Around the room, which was at once the chapter-room and the library of the monastery, on rows of stone benches ranged in tiers, with

\* Cardiganshire.

† Cistercian.

bended heads, sat the monks, with the novices, the elder brothers, facing each other, on either side. At one end, nearest the high throne and lectern of the abbot, sat the prior and the refectiener; and above their heads hung a large ivory crucifix, surrounded by a gilded halo. The architecture of the room, as of most of the monastery, exhibited in its utmost perfection the bold massiveness and almost rude simplicity of the reign of Edward of Caernarvon, during whose inroads into the wild county of Cardigan it had been built. The great shelves that lined the walls above the benches on which the monks were seated groaned with the weight of gilded MSS. and ponderous folios, bound round with brass and silver, studded with crosses, and clasped with metal. Within these coarse caskets great thoughts lay entombed—sarcophagi they were in which those long dead had left inurned the rich balms gathered from long centuries of study.

Over the richly-bossed doors which led into

the cloisters hung the emblazoned flags of the Welsh princes, whose records lay still within the archives of the convent—banners which had once fluttered high over the press of battle, but which now hung withered as the autumn leaves without, for their black, dusty folds were rotting in the house of peace. No fierce war-cry greeted them now, nothing sterner than the distant murmur of mass or psalm breathed through long cloisters from the distant choir.


The sub-prior, an ignorant but simple monk, repeated with careless rapidity, in that monotonous drone, worse than the nasal twang of the Puritans, which acquired for the monks the name of “mumble matins,” the usual prayers for deceased benefactors, long since forgotten but for this, by which the daily chapters were generally opened; while the abbot remained, like one deeply immersed in meditation, his head between hands, his eyes fixed immovably on a broad letter that lay on the lectern before him,

and his lips moving as if in prayer or mute soliloquy.

The abbot was a man of some sixty summers; but time had dealt kindly with him, and it was neither thought nor care, but rather mystic reveries and pious contemplation, that had ploughed those deep furrows on his benevolent, gentle, and passionless features. He looked like one who had all his life been gazing calmly forth at the storm from a convent casement, soothed by the sounds of peace within, and careless of the roar without. Fortune had dealt gently with him, and he loved mankind rather from his ignorance of their follies and crimes than from any more than theoretical knowledge of their virtues. The convent was his only world. His only cares were its petty duties and its dull round of monotonous ceremonies. His voice was sweet and gentle, there was a soft benevolence in his calm, blue, serene eye, and something even apostolic in the soft white locks of the tonsure

that crept round his temples. The cynical observer might perhaps have observed a want of energy in his motions and in his bearing, might have augured a love of ease in the very attitude in which he seated himself in his chair of state, or have discerned, in the chain of gold and the richly-furred robe that peeped through an opening of his plain white robe, something that showed that even from that holy mind the world was not fully alienated. He was one, however, who would have died heroically at the stake to vindicate some abstruse mystery or doubtful tradition of his Church, but who shrank from the political storm now glooming in the horizon.

Leaving his bench ere the murmur of the prayer had well died away, and in the midst of the hum of the monks preparing themselves to listen, the prior, an Italian by birth, whispered earnestly for a moment to the abbot ere he rose to speak, and hastily resuming his place, bent over



some papers that lay scattered before him with an impatient air, like one with difficulty bending a proud spirit to obey the commands of a superior he despised ; then, pushing them aside with a quick hand, he scanned with an eager and restless eye the collected brotherhood, and particularly the abbot, upon whose head fell a stream of light from a stained-glass window above the crucifix, crimsoning his white robe with the rich dye of the Tyrian purple, and playing round his temples like the visible glory that gilds the countenance of a dying saint.

A saturnine expression had Fra Cozza, the prior ; a sneer sat ever upon his curled lip and his sallow and sunken features. There was suspicion in his deep sunken eyes, and they seemed to often rest with special malignity, or even hatred, upon a young monk of frank, generous bearing, who in a distant corner was talking in a low and earnest voice to an aged brother who

sat beside him, and who seemed from his features to be a German by birth. But who would dare to malign Father Cozza, whose vigils were so frequent, whose fasts were so oft, whose camel-knees were grown callous with kneeling on the cold altar-stone, whose lean back was livid with the dark scars of penance-stripes—one whose book against the heresy of the demon-madman, as it called Luther, had attracted even the attention of the holy Pope himself, and had procured a valuable grant to the monastery?

Brother Jerome, the young monk of whom we speak, was a young Englishman, the younger son of a noble house—one who had voluntarily retired from the splendour of his sovereign's court to devote himself to the service of the King of kings. Grief and pious resignation seemed blended in his face; while over all reigned the serenity of a pure heart and a clear conscience, and the calm happiness of tranquil piety.

His pale and hollow cheek was, however, now flushed by the excitement of dispute, and a deeper red shaded it as he saw the abbot's eye turned upon him benignly. Turning his head from his tranquil and unmoved antagonist, he told his beads, and muttering a prayer against temptation, started as his companion pulled his robe and directed his attention to the wandering and unsettled gaze of Cozza.

At that moment, and before he could reply, the abbot rose—a murmur went round the room, in a moment succeeded by the deep stillness of anxious expectation, as all eyes turned towards the speaker:

“Brethren in Christ—evil tidings of troubles and commotions have already reached our lonely convent. I need not tell ye what ye have heard daily from guests in the Hospitium, of ‘wars and rumours of wars, on earth distress of nations,’ and perplexity; the seas and the waves roaring ‘for fear of the things which are to come



upon the troubled world.' Thunder and rebellion hover over the land, dreadful ministers of divine vengeance, and heralds of the latter days, and now more than ever should ye remember the command of Christ: *Vigilate et orate, ne intratis in tentationem*. Evil men are abroad, brethren—Christians, it grieves my soul to say, but in name, and not in very deed—*qui ore confitentur, et factis negant*; false prophets, lying varlets, wolves who devour the flocks—*lupi graves qui non parcunt gregi*—men who disdain the commands of our sovereign lord the king, the defender of the faith, whom God has set over us; and what God hath chosen, call not that unclean. Men who, for filthy lucre, would preserve the empty and impotent worship of dead men's bones, and such fantastic mummary—especial engines of Apollyon, as Origen, I think, somewhere calls them. Yea, a generation of vipers, who serve not God aright, who worship Mammon, who is at once their god and

king, and from whom Jesus himself preserve us."

A murmur almost imperceptible went round the room at this daring avowal of principles which the abbot had long been suspected of secretly advocating. Cozza, like one entranced, remained with his head buried in his hands. The abbot heeded not, or perhaps heard not the interruption, but, with a glance around, again proceeded:

"Will it not, then, rend your breasts, my brethren, when ye hear that but a short hour since came hither a messenger from my Lord Cromwell, bringing intelligence of a revolt in Lancashire, where a vast throng of mere stabbers, vagabond monks, and spendthrifts, misled by those who tear asunder the robe of Christ, once woven perfect and without seam, beleaguer the castle of Pomfret. On their banner, stained with the blood of their countrymen, are blazoned the wounds of Christ, which they

wave in defiance of our Holy Father in God, the Archbishop of York, who hath thrown himself within the hold. Truly, it is men like these who crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. O God!" cried the abbot, overcome by the intensity of his feelings, "is it to such hedge-priests as these that thou saidst, 'Pasce, pasce;' to murderers, who know not the things which be of God, and use the keys of heaven but to unlock the treasure-houses of those they plunder? Yet, my brethren, worse tidings than these threaten to bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave" (and a noiseless tear rolled down his cheek as he spoke). "Would to God that on my head alone fell the blow! Thus writes my Lord Cromwell, and the black lines are graven on my heart:

" 'To the Abbot of Strata Florida, salutation.

" 'I grieve to tell thee, my lord, believing thee to be a true and humble servant of God, that intelligence, from a source that cannot

be suspected, hath reached mine ears, that many of the inmates of thy monastery of the Flowery Plain, or, as the religious term it, 'Strata Florida,' are in constant communication with the rebels who have risen in arms in the southern counties, contrary to the allegiance of true subjects; and, moreover, that a *pilgrimage of grace*, as the knaves term it, is even now secretly forming in the valleys of Cardiganshire. I therefore hereby give thee power, in the name of our royal master, to apprehend any suspected traitors, whether their guilt be deep or their loyalty be wavering, whether in thy convent or abroad; and I shall hold thee accountable with thy head (I say it in all friendship) for any outbreak in thy townships. A band of hagbutteers shall be spared thee, if thou need them, to crush this hornets' nest.

" 'Yours very heartily,


" 'CROMWELL.

" 'Given at the Palace of Windsor,  
15th of September, 1533.'

“ O brethren, ye know not how this wrings my soul! With what divine verity did the blessed St. John say, ‘Omnis qui confitetur Jesum Christum in carne ex Deo est;’ and yet how hard it is for us to throw off the bond of iniquity and the gall of bitterness. It paineth me to use the sword which is given me from the Lord, and I fight as one that fighteth the air against I know not whom. Better were it for me to struggle with those frightful forms of temptation, whom St. Paul compares to wild beasts of Ephesus, than thus to smite those who are ‘bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.’ I cannot believe there are guilty ones among you. Are ye not all of Christ? or are some of you indeed devils, who must be cast out, and whose ministry another shall take?

“ When I look around, I see you receive the tidings as the world does news of evil. Some are bowed down, and groaning beneath the unbearable weight of sorrow” (he looked at Cozza); “some look aghast; while others,

perhaps the guilty of the flock, prate and whisper as if nothing were amiss. Fear and tremble, ye guilty ones, 'for I bear not the sword of the Lord in vain.' In compliance with the claims of my conscience, dear brothers in Christ, for so I must still call ye, I have drawn up an oath of allegiance to our sovereign lord King Henry, which I shall require all of ye, whether servants of God or the devil, to sign at to-morrow's chapter, held at the usual hour of prime; with this, as with a touchstone, I will prove *ex patre diabolo estis*—with this, I will exorcise the fiends of treason that lurk within our cloister, and, rooting them out like the tares of the parable, will deliver them over to the temporal magistrate for the burning. To-night I journey to Aberystwith, having business of some moment with the governor, and the prior, Cozza, goes with me. Brother Jerome will guard the flock till my return, and let, I beseech ye, the prayers of the faithful be offered up that saints and angels may defend us all against the lion that




walketh about seeking whom he may devour.”

Then extending his hands over the assembly, the abbot pronounced the benediction, and the assembly broke up, the monks disappearing, like spectres, with the noiseless tread with which they had entered. In small groups they hastened to their cells to prepare for vespers, or to mutter together their expressions of mutual wonder, fear, and suspicion.

The prior alone remained like one in a vision, or him of whose soul the apostle spoke, “whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth.” There he sat, his head still bent by the habit of affected humility, apparently unconscious of the solitude in which he was left. His eye fixed, his lips moving convulsively, his fingers passing over the beads of his chaplet half mechanically.

“Brother Cozza,” said the abbot, rising from his desk, and touching him on the shoulder, after looking at him for a moment with a look of calm approval, “turn thy pious



thoughts for a moment to earth, and now mount thy white palfrey and come with me to-night to Aberystwith, for we need counsel in these troublous times."

Cozza started at his touch, and looked round at the vacant chamber like one who sees a spectre. The abbot started as the prior's upturned face met his gaze, for a world of contending passions seemed boiling within his heart, and his sunken eyes gleamed with a wild phosphorescent light, that looked almost like the first gleam of madness. On his brow, ordinarily pale, there was, too, a deep hectic patch of scarlet that spread and throbbed beneath the calm glance of the abbot. He might have seemed a long-imprisoned captive, the Ugolino of his own country's poet, brooding in hell over his great wrongs.

"Thy vigils are too numerous, holy father; thy fastings too severe for frail man. Thy spirit is willing, but thy flesh is weak. Come, come, go bid our lay-brother, Gwyllim, saddle



the horses for our journey, and meet us anon at the orchard farm." Without one gesture, but a bend of assent, Cozza stole silently from the room with averted eye and down-cast head, as if still wrestling with some mighty and all-engrossing thought.

"A holy man," soliloquised the benevolent abbot, as he sought the rich chambers which were devoted to his use, "but too ascetical in his deeds of charity; I also fear, superstitious, and too stanch an upholder of the descendants of the fisherman: but Christ's net is large, and in its meshes all varieties of fish are captured. Let our charity, then, be wide and all-embracing as his." And with another glance at his retreating form, the abbot hastened to prepare for his journey, and to give directions for the chapter of the following day.

Within an hour, the abbot and the prior, lighted by the setting sun of an autumn day, were far on their way towards Aberystwith.

## CHAPTER II.

Other sins only speak, murder shrieks out ;  
 The element of water moistens earth,  
 But blood flies upward and bedews the heavens.

WEBSTER.

Such a guilt as sure will lie  
 Howling for ever at your wounded heart,  
 And with you rise to judgment.


*Ibid.*

THE sun was near its setting, and ere the riders were out of sight of the monastery "night's pageant" had commenced in the west. Yonder was the monarch of day, girt with clouds that caught a tincture from his crown of flame, like a hero undaunted though defeated, striving with his shafts of light to still break a way through the dark phalanx of his

rival, night. Already daylight shone, ere the stout palfreys had paced a mile, with a fainter glow, dying out like the last lamp of a glorious banqueting-hall. As they turned to look back, they saw its pale and melancholy lustre gilding the distant pinnacles of Ystrad Flur, that a turn of the road now again rendered visible as they rose, hemmed in by the dark-wooded banks, that once gave it shelter and ornament.


“Such a radiance,” said the good abbot to his absent companion, who had dropped behind, and now spurred his palfrey to reach his superior, “I saw playing upon the calm features of our dear brother Anselm, when he yielded his soul to the God who gave it, last All-Hallow mass.”

His companion made no answer. As he spoke, they were in the act of crossing the Teivy, a small stream that has its source some two miles further to the north-east, and which, breaking through the rampart of stone that in vain tries to confine the subtle element within a tarn, which legends say is unfathom-



able, finds its way slowly to the green, dreary plain which they were traversing.

For another mile they rode on in that silence which, for such different reasons, was congenial to both minds. The tranquil and pious spirit of the abbot had been shaken to the centre by the news of the morning. The calm soul that ordinarily brooded in peace was perturbed and ruffled. Cozza, too, had cause for thought. His mental eye was fixed on the boiling torrent of his own passions, like that of a traveller who watches the fusion in a crater's mouth. His soul was convulsed by the recent birth of a hideous thought too soon to be put in action. For one—for two miles they had thus ridden, undisturbed by any sound but the monotonous clattering of hoofs and the jingling of their ornamented trappings. They had now arrived at a bare, melancholy spot, such as even dreary Cardiganshire can boast but few of, where the horizon was hemmed in with broad green hills of unbroken outline, which the very goat seemed instinctively to have shunned. Even by day no wild




bird sang there, and no bee roamed thither, in search of thinly-scattered flowers; a grey still evening it was, chilling even to men inured to the life of a convent. The place seemed in the dreary twilight the region of a purgatorial dream. In such a waste might St. Anthony have been tempted by the "prince of the powers of the air." The clouds were low upon the hills, and there was an oppressive density in the atmosphere such as often heralds thunder. All nature seemed weighed down and oppressed by the dread of the approaching elementine war. Twilight alone reigned during this dreadful interregnum of sun and moon.

The abbot, arousing himself from a deep reverie into which he had half unconsciously fallen, first broke the silence. So loud and so supernatural seemed his voice, after that long pause, that the Italian started like "a guilty thing upon a fearful summons," but, instantly recovering himself, pushed on his palfrey to his companion's side.

"I feel such a weight at brain and heart, dear brother," he said, "as I never felt before. This seems to me such an eve as may have heralded the dreadful dawn of those days of darkness that fell upon the Egyptians; but I would talk to thee now of deeper things than such *lemaures* of the mind, as Origen calls them." He looked at the sky for a moment, and proceeded: "Unbosom thyself to me, thy father in the faith, and tell me if thou indeed knowest of any of our brotherhood who favour the Judases of whom thou this morning heardest? Alas! that any should indulge in a sin worse than that compact with the Evil One which I, with many of the fathers, could almost believe is the sin against the Holy Ghost, spoken of by our blessed Lord."

"I know of none," replied Cozza, sternly, "except it may be brother Jerome, or that heretic Eisenstein. They whisper together, they are less constant at lauds, and are oftener shut in their cells."



"I cannot mistrust them," said the abbot, firmly; "they are good men, though they do not conceal their opinion that the Pope should have no jurisdiction in this land."

"And callest thou this little," said Cozza, with an ill-concealed expression of rage, that however passed unnoticed by his unobservant companion, "to deny the authority of him to whom Jesu gave the keys of hell and heaven? But hast thou heard aught lately," he added, with the concentrated manner of one who would dive into the very heart of him he addresses, "of that runaway monk Luther—that blasphemer, that sin-spotted son of perdition?"

"Speak not so harshly of one whom God alone will judge," said the abbot, reprovably. "The holy Pontiff can well spare from his well-filled treasuries the profits of those his misused indulgences."

His companion's brow had been growing darker and darker during this speech in favour of one so odious; in another instant

he would have forgotten all respect due to a superior whom he secretly despised; but at that instant the sound of the vesper-bell came borne towards them upon the almost breathless wind. It was the voice of religion speaking to the shepherd and the traveller on the mountains; it seemed, as Dante says, "to mourn the passing day."

Dismounting, the monks knelt for a moment and again rose. At that instant the hand of Cozza was groping in the folds of his robe, but, withdrawing it, he calmly mounted and rode on behind the abbot, who, crossing his brow and breast, was uttering a short prayer against "the terror that walketh by night." It was a stiletto that Cozza sought for in his robe. What stayed him? —The lurid glare of that comet that now flamed forth like a burning world in the heavens. His ghastly eye turned upon it with an expression of pain, fear, and hatred.

"The moon will be up soon to



light us to our desired haven," said the abbot, cheerfully, with an anxious look at the luminary, which, almost as he spoke, came forth from behind a dark vaporous cloud, whose skirts it suffused with silver; "but prithee, good Cozza, spur on thy palfrey, which cares for thee truly no more than a Flemish charger for a page, rouse thyself from those trancelike contemplations which too often unseat reason, and look at yon comet, like a flaming sword, that threatens more woe to the earth."

Involuntarily his companion looked up at the fearful symbol that seemed to his heated fancy to redden their very path, and he shuddered as he looked.

"'Twill be midnight ere we reach Aberystwith, my lord Abbot," he exclaimed, assuming, with all the versatility of his reptile nature, a correspondent joyfulness, as if he had shaken away all care from his heart; "but still, methinks, if the moon shines as it shineth now, I could even point thee out the

new and dangerous fissure in the arch of the Pont y Fynach, could you" (and he assumed the blindest tones of courtesy, and of one proposing an unreasonable request) "but dismount and descend a few rude steps of a fisherman's path that leads to the black torrent—but that were impossible."

"What fissure dost thou speak of?" said the abbot, in a tone of wonder; "I think, good Cozza, that thou hast conversed so much with the saints, that lately thou hast forgotten how to speak to sinful men." (Why did Cozza avert his eyes from that gentle glance, as though it had been the withering gaze of a lost spirit?) "Hast thou known me to ever shun fatigue and toil when God or man could be served, weak and erring as I am? How should I lament if harm were to betide that old bridge built by the religious of an early age, consecrated by the feet of the preachers of the cross, and over which so many saints in heaven have passed and repassed,

while toiling and sorrowing on this our earth. Have we not still in our convent traditions of the struggles of our blessed founders with those horrid monsters of the old religion who, rising from the black abyss which seemeth like a sallyport of hell, thwarted those who would have first spanned it over with a pathway of stone for the love of Christ? Judge me not so unkindly, Cozza."

"Pardon me, Father Abbot, I did but try thy zeal. A peasant to whom but this morning I gave alms at the convent-grate, told me of a fissure which had lately appeared, and which threatens danger; already a troop of horsemen has turned back and sought a safer road. The danger needs, he says, but to be arrested in time, and to our care, as its early founders, appertaineth its restoration, though the vulgar say it was reared by Apollyon himself." And Cozza essayed to smile.

"Oh! God forbid!" said the abbot,

whose zeal was now fully aroused—"God forbid that, to get an hour sooner to our hostelrie, we should imperil the life of man or beast."

The good man had scarcely spoken, ere, turning an abrupt angle of the road, the Pont y Fynach, or Monk's Bridge, came in sight. The course of the Mynach, the thunder of whose falls they had long heard pulsating through the rocky glen in which it roared, lay beneath. Within a hundred yards of those broad, unbroken, barren mountains, the landscape had changed, as if they had suddenly passed over the boundary of some new region. In the midst of a wide arena of gathered hills broke the great black chasm, worn as by the dark subsidence of a deluge, through which, unseen, tearing their impeded way, roar the twin torrents, the Mynach and the Rheidol, that, leaping down from their mountain homes to whisper weird things, and to work woe to man in this wild, dreary

spot, crash on, rending a path between the thick-wooded rocks that vainly attempt to restrain their blind fury. On the one side of the road lay the thick sloping forest, like an immense but silent multitude, beneath the moon, now newly risen, the tree tops tinted by its pale silver fire; beneath them, hundreds of feet below on either side, roared the waters, as they dashed over huge fragments of blanched rock, and wore them into deep channels with the lashing foam, which a great poet, speaking of such a scene, calls "the sweat of their great agony," in very scorn of the brute might that would bar their progress to the free, broad, peaceful current beyond. Here and there in the distance, through breaks in the green woods, might be seen the white flashings of the highest fall, which, surging and boiling, filled the air with the eternal sound of its unintermitting thunder. Under their feet, poised in air, dark against the clear sky, rose the bridge

which tradition reported to have been raised by supernatural help, angelic or devilish, as monk or peasant told the tale. Beneath its arch lay the deepest torrent, whose silent rushing was more dreadful than even the clamour in the distance. The shadow of the arch threw the water's black depths into a deeper shade.

How solemn it looked, that work of men who had passed away, even dwarfed as it was by the Titanic workings of nature which lay around it and beneath it. Could man's dark thoughts plan evil there, with the very sounds of God's unceasing voice in the cataract ringing in his ears? The good man could hear that still small whisper of angels in the little runnelet that trickled through the woods to its own soft silvery murmur; but the wicked was deaf even to those mighty warning-throbbings that seemed to shake the firm-set earth.

"Might not peasants well imagine, dear brother, that spirits of the waters dwelt

in these depths, to tempt travellers to destruction?"

Cozza replied not; but could the abbot have heard his mutterings, he would have known that he was articulating between his teeth, "Not yet—not yet!"

"Cozza, I fear for thy health. I never saw thee look so wan as now. Thou shalt stay awhile by the sea, down at Aberystwith; it will render thee fitter to bear the toils and asceticisms of our cloister."

## CHAPTER III.

TYING his patient palfrey with that of the abbot, to whom he pressed to do service with all the feigned humility of a lay brother, to the trunk of a birch, whose silver stem sprang up like a slender pillar of silver from a crevice in the old bridge, Cozza knelt for a moment in prayer at the foot of a wayside cross, reared, as the legend ran, to the memory of a knight who, long before the erection of the bridge, had perished while crossing the ford below during a stormy January night, though, according to a conflicting story, it recorded the later murder of a Flemish merchant in a dark cavern near the falls, far beneath



the grey arch. A half-obliterated inscription on the shaft, bidding the passer-by pray for the soul of Sir Walter de Clare, favoured the former opinion; and still, at stated periods, the monks of Strata Florida sang masses at midnight for the soul of the departed knight.

Taking the arm of his more youthful and vigorous companion, the abbot, turning into a precipitous path to the left of the road, commenced the descent with the hesitating step of one more accustomed to rush-strewn floor and smooth-paved cloister than the broken passage of a torrent-path. At every step he glanced up inquiringly at the bridge, whose dark shadow contrasted strongly with its rough surface, frosted by the moonlight, which, finding its way by devious openings through the obscure trees above, strove in vain to light up the black stream that foamed and seethed in impotent madness in the narrow hell of waters beneath. Many a traveller

had entered that rocky mouth and returned no more.

"I see no fissure," said the abbot, impatiently turning round to his companion, whose pale face grew darker, as if it had been shaded by the wing of a passing spirit.

"Further down—yet further down," he said, in a deep hoarse voice. "Gird up your robe to the very girdle; I say the fissure gapes wider than even on yesternight. Step on yon broad, smooth table-rock that overhangs the bed of the torrent. Bend more over; I am close at thy back."

The abbot leant forward and peered into the darkness, and, standing again erect, looked like a spectre, as his white robes gleamed in the moonlight, that now broke through the noon of night to the very surface of the hell-pool.

"How dreadful is this place!" he exclaimed; "well might the holy men of God believe that here lay an entrance to the purgatory of Ocean, the roar of the torrent

drowning the cries of the suffering wretches. O Domine, dirige nos!"

"Then join them, fool!" cried Cozza, who had hitherto remained silent, with the shriek of a madman when the hour of frenzy approaches, and striking the wretched man as he spoke heavily on the brow with his clenched fist. There was a heavy plunge, a whirlpool of spouting foam, a stifled cry of "Oh, Mother of God!" and a mangled form, borne through the winding chasm in a moment with the speed of light, helplessly as a thistledown on a swollen river, perceptible to the eye only by the flash of the white robe as it passed, floated out slowly, spread out upon the dark water, floated under the dull shadow of the bridge, was retarded for a moment by some rock that impeded its progress, then hurried on by a side current—hurried on, and passed away.

"Heretic! dullard!" exclaimed the monk, "well hast thou deserved thy fate. Now have I requited thee for proud scorn and

for cruel jibes on the poor monk of Italy, now thy vacant seat shall another take—let the cause of God go on and prosper! I thank God for this hour of vengeance!" And the murderer fell on his knees, in impious mockery of the God of peace and love.

For a moment he remained motionless; the fire of conscience was already lit in heart and brain—a flame that would grow fiercer, but never could be extinguished. But an instant before the abbot had stood beside that red-handed murderer, his own baleful look had rested on those calm, placid features, now marred and defaced by death. And such a death! One little moment, and that soul stood before the face of its Creator, if such there were—for Cozza doubted of hell and heaven—and it was he who had sent the soul "unknelled and unannealed," with all its imperfections on its head, to that dread bar! Could he, who but three short hours since sat at the head of his chapter in all the pride of

spiritual and temporal power, be already a swollen and disfigured corpse?

Cozza was a murderer—his livid face was branded by passion as with the badge of Cain. It was base and cowardly he knew—yet he trembled with the fears of those poor superstitious serfs at whose confessions he had mocked. That peal of thunder, rolling among the distant hills, and now vibrating nearer, was it the voice of God, such as spoke to Cain when the first-shed blood was still steaming up an accursed libation to the evening clouds?

How it blasted him, that lightning, that clove through the arch like the flaming sword of some avenging angel! Now all nature seemed gifted with a voice to denounce his crime and to proclaim it to the universe. Into his perturbed mind there thronged legends of murdered saints, and of the dreadful end of their murderers.

The thunder's dreadful "organ-pipe" proclaimed it, and told it with the voice of Heaven to the winds; the roaring waters caught it

next, as they fell from rocky ledge to shelf below, and they shouted it to the little silver-tongued brooks that rippled down the hills; then the fading leaves became instinct with life, and nestled and bent together in fearful whispering, that maddened him to hear, as some night-bird, screaming far overhead, like a soul taking flight, bore it away to other lands—perhaps to his own fair country of vine and orange-blossoms, the land of his innocent youth, the land of his earliest crimes.

But the sternest witness was the wind that howled around him, and flapped his robe as he stood gazing with wild eyes and clutched hands at the spot where the body had disappeared. It was the wind that, pouring down the ravine of the mountains, roared like a demon for his prey, and shook the surging and rocking trees, and bellowed in defeated rage through the echoing arch, muttering as if men were standing above and calling for the murderer, over the dark abyss of the torrent. Was some spirit coming to smite him where he stood—the

murderer, the infidel, the sinner against the Holy Ghost, if ever one lived on God's earth? Now the wind grew calmer, and died away in inarticulate mutterings; then it swept along with redoubled violence, so that the very trees bent under it like pliant rushes. And this storm his crime had called up. Groans and shrieks seem to reach him from the darkness beyond. The merest imagination grew at once to a reality. The storm grew bolder. Crime never looks so horrible as on such a night, when the minister of God seems abroad riding on the storm.

The monk, clinging to the rock, looked down again upon the fatal spot from which his eyes had hitherto been averted. The waters, swollen by rain that had fallen at noon, were foaming like a hell-caldron within their narrow prison. He could not see the body; one fragment of a white robe lay upon a rock almost beyond the reach of the water, but as he gazed a blast carried it down the stream and it passed away. The arch threw its deepest

shadow upon one still eddy, there the body might lie, or it might have been borne down to the falls below by the raging impetuosity of the stream. What if it had been dashed on some dry-lichened rock, where it would be seen by the first fisherman who waded down thither ere daybreak? Oh, horror! that crime should prove so useless, that all should be lost in heaven and nothing gained on earth!

Come what will, he must see the end. Bedrenched as he was, with the speed of one who, winged with hope, follows a wounded deer, the Italian clambered *alone* up that steep, rarely-trodden path, and in a moment was again upon the wayside. There, beside the cross, lighted by a momentary break in the storm, still stood the palfreys, drenched and trembling in the rain and wind. The abbot's he unfastened, and lashing him with a thong, urged him at the height of his speed towards Aberystwith. Swift as a mountaineer he sought the right-hand path to the river. Clam-



bering down the rocky side, pushing his way through bush, bramble, and thick under-wood, he hurried on to the lower falls, guided by the sound of their loud-voiced thunder.

Working his toilsome way, soaked with rain, and bleeding with the thorns that tore his hands, he reached a small cavern, the scene of ancient murder, hollowed out of a rock that overhung the falls. Close to him—so close that he could have touched it—poured down the sheet of water from a height of ninety feet, like a river flashing past with the speed of light, broken into crystal foam by the angles of black rock that jarred the thin veil of water that leapt on to basins below, from whence it fell again to the bed beneath. No mangled corpse was there—no relic of the deed of blood; pure and unstained by gore, the waters passed like molten silver from a mine fused by the hidden fire of a volcano.

“But, ah! God above, Holy Virgin, and all the saints who pity man, was that a human voice, or a mocking fiend, that cries so shrilly from above, ‘My lord abbot!’ In God’s

name, answer!"—a quick footstep is crushing its way through bushes. The murderer will be caught like a wolf in his den; to escape is impossible; the steps come nearer. With a scowl of rage and terror Cozza grasps a poniard. The blade flashes in the moonlight. Hush! keep closer, cower down behind that jutting rock. "My lord abbot!" He comes—'tis Jerome; he passes so near that the murderer felt his warm breath; one blow, he falls with a deep groan. Cozza stays not to repeat the stroke. Deep panting, with glaring eye, and with his hand still clutching the knife in all the wild energy of his despair, the monk regained the path. With a hurried look around, and listening for a moment, he leapt on his palfrey, set the other loose and galloped in the direction of the monastery.

Away from the scene of blood, his fears soon subsided. He grew calmer, and mocked at his own guilty qualms as he urged on his benumbed steed with word and blow. White was that monk's robe when he had bent his knee at early matins, but now, to the eye of

sorrowing angel and guardian spirit, it was all blood bestained. He hurries on, hardly daring, in spite of the hardihood of a seared conscience, to look back upon a track traversed but a few hours since ; shutting his eyes at lonely spots which he had seen lying peaceful beneath the sunset, when his mind was but labouring with thought of a murder as yet unperformed—with thoughts of priestly power and potency yet to come. The moon looked forth again, as if the struggles of nature had passed away with the crime it were vain to veil. How calmly it looked down upon him, like the sorrowing gaze of God himself. The shadows that fell on road-side wall and hedge seemed double. “’Twas fantasy,” he said ; “mere brain-sick thought.” He had but sent two accursed heretics a few days earlier to judgment.

He thought of the dropping of blood when the ripples of a rill caught his ear ; and now he sweats for very anguish, for ’tis scarce a mile from the monastery, and behind him, on the night wind, comes the trampling sound of horse’s hoofs. The dead pursue not the living !

## CHAPTER IV.

CONSCIENCE needs no corporeal form to haunt the criminal ; she is invisible, but still present in the cell and on the scaffold ; and her loudest voice is when he stands for the moment before death, trembling and appalled before the gazing thousands. Cozza is paralysed with fear ; his hardihood forsakes him. From his half-frozen hand drops the bridle, as a horseman rides up and salutes him. A plain trooper by his dress—a cross on his plain doublet, and a red feather in a plain steel morion. 'Twas a hearty, jovial voice that bid Cozza hail. Strangely discordant it seemed in the mur-

derer's ears—could it be a minister of blood?

“*Pax vobiscum*, Sir Monk! but I have ridden hard to reach thee. Thy palfrey flew as I've seen a wild horse do before the wolves of the savannahs. But how pale and haggard thou lookest—art unwell, man? Hast thou just left some bed of death? They say monks spend not all their time by dying men.”

“Death—dying men!” stammered the Italian, unable to shake off the fears that beset him in spite of the subtlety of his nature.

“Death, good Signor Echo—yes, death; and why not? Do Adam's children never die among these healthy mountains? Sure, if none look better than thee, thou sheeted ghost with thy shroud on, the sexton has good guerdon and worn-out shovels.”

“A peace to thy ribaldry, good soldier, for such I judge thee,” said the monk, instantly sobered by the vicinity to danger,

and assuming his wonted soft and servile voice. "I ride on business of the convent, and have visited no dead to-night."

"Well, by the mass! if thou hadst just emerged from a charnel-house, thou couldst not look more like a mould-turner than thou dost. By our Lady! if thou hadst seen death in as many shapes as I have, the fearful change, as the mumble matins call it, coming over white and dusky faces alike, thou wouldst not fear it much, but prepare to meet it gaily, flask in hand, like a welcome guest or an unexpected bride, rather than freeze thy blood on cold stones, or whining out prayers in damp cells, wrapped in sackcloths, as those of you who don't love women and the wine-cup do. It's a cursed scurvy life—give me the camp, father."

"Good night, friend. I am bound for yonder monastery," said Cozza, impatient of the wild license of the rough trooper.

"Not too fast, pious brother. I wend

thither too; and this stout roan longs for his oats as much as his rider does for a pasty."

They had approached the gate as they spoke, and within could be heard the deep sound of the bell tolling for lauds, or midnight service. The lay brother that opened the barred door started at the sight of Cozza, who, frowning at his wondering gaze, silenced his curiosity by bidding him quickly find fit lodgings and refecton for the stranger.

"And where leftst thou our holy father?" said a monk who met them on their way to the hospitium.

"I bade him adieu," said Cozza, coldly, "within sight of the ocean. He bade me tarry with him; but I would no longer loiter amid worldly scenes, unfitted for the Christian mind. For there was a pageant on the morrow, and jousts."

"Farewell till the morning," said the soldier, as Cozza left him over a flask of Xeres and a smoking fowl. "It is already reddening for the dawn."

"Red as blood," muttered the Italian with a sigh, as he hastened to his cell, and, appalled as he was, threw himself on his poor pallet, but not to sleep; for with each half-formed dream came thoughts of seas of blood, of the torrent, of floating corpses and inarticulate voices; every scene, just as if it should have melted into gentle, soothing, blessed sleep, was lit up with the glare of an impending comet, that went through Cozza's brain like a blinding flash, and made him leap up and stare around. Then he would lie down, and act over each moment of the crime, feel the night air play upon his fevered cheek, and the blood again throbbing more leisurely to his heart, when that cry of "My lord abbot!" rang in his ears—the voice of that accursed monk who ever crossed his path to thwart and to torment—whose presence was as hateful to him, as torturing, as a pure angel's would be to the mad blasphemers of hell's dark regions. Again



that hot breath rests upon his cheek ; it seems for hours—hours of agony. Once more the cry, “My lord abbot!” and he wakes from his first short sleep. It is day ; the realities of a gnawing conscience are less dreadful than the pangs of those dreams. There are the bare walls of his cell ; a stream of pale light falls through the narrow-grated aperture on a crucifix—the image of that Saviour whom he had crucified afresh, to whom he dared not pray. He awoke to the dreadful consciousness—which no sophistry can hide from itself—of the black and eternal presence of crime that forces itself into every thought, and blends with every scene—he has, too, fears for the future.

How can he meet the questions of his inquiring brethren? How can he give a probable account of a death of which he knows so well, but should know nothing? What if the body should be recovered? He rises and sits on the side of his pallet, and leans his burning brow upon his hands.

He has a dozen immature schemes within his mind; it is his to twine them into all the glosed semblance of truth. Could the palfrey have fallen over the precipice—the moon was too bright. Now he has it! He leaps up in delight: that wild stranger must weave the snare. A knock. He starts as guilt alone will start.

“Fra Cozza.”

“Who’s there?”

A well-known name. A monk enters.

“I heard a shriek, and came, thinking you might be in some grievous pain, for you have lately looked overworn with vigil and penance.”

“I am well, brother; but in a dream I wrestled with a demon who would not leave me, and I shrieked in my despair; at last, I muttered an exorcism and it fled. But what of the—Je—the—are all our brothers within at their devotions?”

“All save the abbot and brother Jerome, whom none have heard of since vespers.”

"Vile heretic! I gage my golden crucifix that Jerome has left us for ever. But talk not of him—mention not his accursed name," said Cozza, with an outburst of passion so unexpected from one so saintly, that it at once astonished and awed into silence the humble servitor. "Tarry not here with this idle prating; in the absence of the renegade the management of the holy house devolves by right on me. The day draws on; bring pens and an inkhorn to my cell, then rouse the stranger who came here last night, and bring him hither in half an hour.

In an instant the lay brother returned with the inkhorn, and, bowing humbly to the spiritual regent, withdrew. Then barring his cell carefully, the Italian, lifting his rude mattress, drew a paper from a hiding-place, and began to write earnestly, but slowly, and with the air of one who studied the shape of every letter. Then folding the sheet into a square form, he bound it with

a silk band and sealed it with a seal drawn from his girdle. He had scarcely finished ere a tap at the door announced the arrival of the stranger. Cozza unbarred it, dismissed the attendant monk, admitted the soldier with a smile of recognition, and again closed the door cautiously behind him.

"A soldier, as thou seemest to be," he said, in a confidential voice, "will, I suppose, do anything for an angel, when he ventures his life daily for a paltry groat?"

"I draw my sword for him who pays me best," said the soldier, bluntly, making an awkward salute as to one whom he now discovered to be of higher rank than he had supposed. "Is the service a perilous service? 'The harder the knocks the more crowns in the pouch,' says the adage."

"No perilous task is mine, friend. I would have thee but deliver this letter to the chapter, to whom thou must represent thyself as sent from the castellan of Aberystwith."

"Oh, mere lying and a little honest perjury," said the man, with a glance of half-sarcastic *naïveté*.

"But I had almost forgot to ask thee on what errand thou art bound to these wild regions away from hold or garrison. Art thou one of Vaughan's men, or but an hag-butteer from Conway?"

"In nomine sanctorum Lutherus anathema," said the soldier, quickly, eyeing keenly his interrogant.

"Lutherus anathema maranatha," replied Cozza, giving the countersign of the Pilgrims of Grace.

"I am sent hither from the North to bid the pilgrims hasten, for there the faithful have already risen against a robber king and his butcher minister, who is more fit to trail a pike, as he once did, than hold the reins of state."

"The beacon needs but to be kindled; bills and bows are already distributed. Once ring our convent-bell backwards, and half Wales will rise from sleep."

"But have you no false heretics whom we have to fear?"

"A few such are there within our convent; but for them," said Cozza, with a boding frown, "we will provide. Beneath this are vaults where many skeletons lie in chains—the living shall take their place."

"Ah, ah," said the soldier, smiling; "there's nothing like your monk when his blood's warm, if the stake be piled, and the fire ready."

But Cozza heard him not. Calling a humble monk who was praying in an adjoining cell, he bid him summon those he wot of to meet him in the chapter-room without a moment's delay.

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"This soldier brings us a letter from Aberystwith; doubtless from our holy father." Breaking the thread, he read its contents with a simulated voice of sorrow and astonishment:

“ ‘To the Religious of the Convent of Strata Florida—  
Salutem in Domine. .

“ ‘I grieve to tell you that your father in God, Abbot Hilary, fell asleep in Christ soon after his arrival in this our castle. Departing without a groan, his blessed spirit flew to join the just in heaven. He will be buried in the castle chapel, privately, to-morrow at eventide, and masses shall be said for his soul. Pray that he rest in peace. Farewell.

“ ‘THOMAS GRENVILLE,

“ ‘Governor of the Castle of Aberystwith for his Majesty  
King Henry VIII., Defender of the Faith.’ ”

All were silent for a moment; some shed tears, and others hid their faces in their robes. A grey-headed monk broke the silence.

“A sore blow, dear brethren, has indeed this day befallen us; but for the blessed man weep not, nor can we regret the loss, if, as we fear, the late abbot had rather swerved in his heart from the faith of his fathers, having, with some others of his flock, imbibed lately some tenets of the damnable heresies of Germany.

In these troublous times the abbot's throne must not remain a day untenanted. And who is more fitting to guard the flock from the wolves than Father Cozza? whose sanctity so few of us can equal."

Those present hailed the choice with exclamations. The Italian had risen to address them, when a monk, pale and trembling, rushed in.

"An armed multitude," he cried, "besieges the monastery, headed by one bearing a banner blazoned with the wounds of Christ. They demand audience of the abbot, and refuse to believe his absence."

"Bid them tarry awhile," said Cozza, with a proud gesture of command that astonished his associates, who had seen in him before only the self-denying ascetic, "till the abbot come forth."

Then quickly assuming the rich dress of his predecessor, which the obsequious servants brought him, and followed by a train of monks, he hastened to the barred gate, that



now echoed with the thundering blows of the assailants.

"Burst them open," cried a voice, "in the name of the Three Kings, and purge the convent of heretics!"

"Open not the doors to the vile rabble," said the soldier, scornfully.

"Throw them wide," said Cozza to the porter, who with trembling hand fumbled at the massive bolts.

With ferocious cries, like a pack of famished wolves upon a sheepfold, in burst the motley crowd of assailants, who fell back at the sight of the procession that fronted them.

The leader, a man with the grizzled hair and stern look of an old soldier, bore a halberd in his hand. At his back came a small body of men, whose richly-embroidered doublets and ornamented weapons seemed to indicate a higher rank than their followers, who thronged behind waving rude bills and pikes. Their costume was as various as their arms, for while some wore the plumed hel-

metres of knights, others had donned the old hood of a former century, or the flat cap of the citizen of the day.

The stern look of defiance in the leader's eye changed to friendly greeting as he beheld Cozza.

"We came, holy father," he exclaimed, "thinking to find one who loved not our cause as thou dost. From thy hand, then, shall our banner receive consecration, ere we sweep down, like a storm, upon the guilty land."

Cozza replied not, but, raising a crucifix on high, led the way into the church. Two by two followed the monks, and the rebels thronged after in a tumultuous band.

The church was a beautiful erection of the decorated period, though here and there a low and massive pillar, with its toothed moulding, spoke of ruder hands and an earlier age. Over the gorgeous altar, lustrous with golden chasings and velvet blazonries, the stained windows threw a deeper and a softer radiance.

The music thunder rolling shook  
The prophets blazoned on their panes,

As with unfaltering voice and firm hand the murderer elevated the Host above the kneeling multitude. There was a moment's silence ere he pronounced the solemn ritual of consecration. It was broken by a loud footstep—then another. The foremost intruder was a noble, richly clad in the costly furs and sumptuous robes of the period, who, holding his plumed hat, fastened by a carcanet of rubies, in one hand, and a drawn sword in the other, and disregarding all glances fixed upon him, strode firmly and slowly to the altar.

The new abbot trembled as he laid his hand softly upon his shoulder. Cozza dropped the wafer; the golden cup against which he reeled fell, and the red wine streamed over his white robe.

"There are stains on thy robe deeper than those of wine," said a harsh voice. It was the soldier, who rose from the crowd.

"I denounce thee," said the noble, "Fran-

cisco Cozza, as a murderer, and as a traitor to thy king! Guy Beckton, did he not pay thee to bring a forged letter to the chapter?"

"He did," said the soldier; "he gave me two angels for the price of blood, which I now fling at the assassin's feet."

"Bring in the body of the murdered abbot," cried the noble, "that it may blast the wretched monk."

As he spoke, a trampling was heard without, and four peasants entered bearing a corpse, covered with a sheet, upon a hand-bier, and placed it before the altar, the kneeling men shrinking from its contact. Again cried the noble, and the words pierced the murderer's heart like the sword of the Spirit, "Bid Brother Jerome come before us."

For the first time Cozza spoke, convulsively. "No, I defy you—he is dead! Say, rather, bring in the second bier. Who dares to——"

"Father Jerome is present," cried a figure,

rising from the crowd, throwing off a dark hood that had hidden his face, and stepping beside the bier.

“Miserable reptile!” he shouted—“murderer! demon! for whom hell must frame some novel punishment—some redder chamber—Oh, thank thy Saviour, whom thou hast scorned, that thou hast but one victim to accuse thee at God’s bright bar, and to shame thee before the fiery seraphim! It was I who, suspecting the workings of thy black heart, and penetrating the thin veil of thy miserable hypocrisy, followed thee to the terrible abyss, lively image of the terrors of that day of doom to which thou art hastening so fast. Thy dagger scratched my flesh, but pierced not deeper. Seeing me struck to the earth by the shock, thou thoughtest me dead. Ere the sound of thy horse’s hoofs had died away in the distance, I had met with the minister of vengeance whom God had sent—my Lord Cromwell” — the multitude started — “and you see him before you!” It was the soldier.

"Innocent as I am, I trembled when the morning's light showed me this poor mangled body." As he spoke, he withdrew the cloth from the face of the corpse. The crowd were hushed into silence at the awful scene, for the monk, standing in all the ardour of his passion, his face lit by the sunlight, and his robe dyed richer than that of princes with the reflection of the painted windows—

Rich with the blood of prophets and of kings,  
Fairer than are the tiger-moth's deep damasked wings—

looked like some avenging angel. Upon the bier were turned the glassy eyes of Cozza.

"I come here," said Cromwell, assuming at once his natural voice, and treading the rebel flag contemptuously under his feet as he spoke, "in the king's name!"

The rebels started at the sound. Some even brandished their arms, others raised faint shouts of "Down with the heretics!" but they quickly died away.

"Resistance is in vain," he said; "a force treble yours, of arquebusiers with lighted

matches, gird round the monastery ; we took care to gather the hounds together ere we pitched the toils. In the name of King Henry, I offer an amnesty to all. I bid you hasten to your homes, and leave those to govern the realm who are fitter for the office than a pack of base hinds and scurvy drudges. Ten bad monks, whose names I have here, shall be furnished with a crown apiece, and shall be sent forth to till the earth ; but to one alone God and man refuse pardon—for him the headsman waits impatiently, and counts the minutes.”

He pointed, as he spoke, sternly to the trembling abbot, who clung helplessly, as if all courage had deserted him, to the altar-cloth.

“ Francisco Cozza, thy crimes are manifold. This is not the first blood that has stained those hands. Remember Amalfi—but why waste words on such a black monster ? Brother Jerome, esteemed for thy sanctity and the unostentatious virtue of thy life, we appoint

thee abbot of the monastery of Strata Florida, in the room of Francisco Cozza, condemned to death for a thousand crimes."

At the hated name of Jerome, Cozza, who had hitherto stood motionless as the corpse on which he gazed, started up, and, cleaving his way through the crowd, drew a short poniard from his sleeve, and aimed a blow at Jerome ; but his intended victim swerving aside, the weapon failed to inflict a wound. Then, forcing his way through the multitude, who made a path for him in their terror, Cozza leaped through a door leading to the belfry, and disappeared.

"Ten gold pieces if he's taken alive!" said Cromwell. With horrible coolness of preparation, an arquebusier lighted his match at a censer, and, followed by two billmen, hurried in pursuit. It was too late. Ere they could reach him, the murderer, winged by despair, had thrown himself to the paved court below.

By the order of Cromwell the villain's body, having been for awhile hung upon the topmost



pinnacle of the tower, was taken down and buried, without mass or requiem, in the orchard of the monastery.

“VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY IT,  
SAITH THE LORD.”

END OF VOL. I.



